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Netnography of Fan Localization on Social Media Releases: Observation of Overwatch (OW) and Overwatch League (OWL)

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Abstract

The fanbase of the *Overwatch* series and its esports competition, *Overwatch* League, has witnessed numerous enthusiasts, who are dedicated to fan localization of diversified social media releases from English sources into the Chinese context. The implementation of such fan activities has significantly enhanced the dissemination of information across various language contexts, thereby fostering extensive interactions within global fan communities. Through frameworks of practice-led research and netnography, this article examines Chinese fan localizers' incentives and procedures in contributing to the English-Chinese localization of social media content. It also sheds light on potential localization issues concerning including authenticity of the information, localization quality, and fan localizers' subjectivity. From an academic standpoint, this article explores the significant transformation of audiovisual works by extending academic cognition into new media forms, technical tools, user behaviors, and relationships with communication and translation. It illustrates the multifaceted nature of game localization and highlights the potential integration of social media fandom to generate localized content related to video games. Furthermore, it delves deeper into the intricate interplay between game localization, audiovisual translation, and game communities.

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1. Introduction

The advent of communication technologies has significantly broadened the scope for social beings to transcend their physical limitations (e.g., Taylor et al., 2013; Biocca & Levy, 2013). Social media are interactive technologies to facilitate the creation and dissemination of information, ideas, interests, and diversified forms of expression within virtual communities and networks (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Fandoms in the digital age utilize social media platforms to connect, interact, and exchange knowledge about their shared interests (Pearson, 2010). The interaction on social media through ways including views, likes, and reposts can sometimes significantly amplify the virality of messages on the Internet, especially in the global fandom (Hutchins & Tindall, 2016).

The incentives for the research lie in the observation that members of a local game community often exhibit significant demand for acquiring diversified social media releases, even if some of them are originally targeted at audiences speaking different languages. The information from different language contexts, carried in multimodal forms (e.g., text, image, video) and multiple resources (e.g., official posts, fan posts) usually provides members of a specific game community with insights into global perspectives, thereby enhancing their fan engagement and satisfaction. Consequently, the utilization of social media platforms to release fan posts has progressively become a prevalent means for extensive dissemination of fan localization on social media releases associated with video games or esports. However, the dearth of scholarly research in these related fields implies a large deficiency.

2. A brief introduction to *Overwatch*, *Overwatch* League and the Chinese community

Overwatch (Blizzard Entertainment, 2016) and *Overwatch 2* (Blizzard Entertainment, 2022) are team-based massively multiplayer online (MMO) first-person shooter (FPS) video games, developed and published by Blizzard Entertainment. *Overwatch 2* (OW2) is the updated and iterated version of *Overwatch* (OW). OW2 has replaced OW since its release on 5 October 2022 with renewed aspects such as interfaces, gameplay modes, character models, and maps.

Overwatch League (OWL), owned by Blizzard Entertainment, is a series of professional esports tournaments based on OW or OW2, with its inaugural season in 2018. The teams competing in OWL are independent and city-based, differentiated by their cultural identities (e.g., color, logo), ownership, and team players. The inherent nature of OWL cultivates distinct fan bases for both the team and the player, which do not completely overlap.

Fandom for OW and OWL are inherently intertwined due to the highly centralized significance in the esports nature of the game, with the overall fandom usually called OW global or local communities. The OW Chinese community's presence was once prominent and conspicuous. China has offered a wide range of enthusiasts, engaging from gameplay to online fan creation (e.g., interesting comments, talented fan arts, or in-time news dissemination), and even offline activities (e.g., fan meetings). To increase the connection between fan groups and officials, talented fan contributors were once invited to attend the

Blizzard Chinese annual ceremony called *huangjin niandu shengdian* 黄金年度盛典 "the Annual Gold Grand Ceremony". Echoing Zimmerman (2019, p. 913), the complex affiliations of the OW Chinese community result in members inhabiting different stages of the membership life cycle, and the diversity can keep them more likely to continue playing.

Unfortunately, this peak state has come to a historical freezing period with the termination of the cooperation between Blizzard and NetEase in January 2023. The cooperation between the two giants started in 2008, due to the regulations of the Chinese government that non-Chinese video game companies need to partner with Chinese manufacturers on the distribution of non-Chinese video games into the Chinese market (Zhang & Chiu, 2020) and should process extremely sophisticated censorship (Zhang, 2012). To date, no other Chinese agencies announced their partnership with Blizzard, which has resulted in Blizzard's servers originally designed for China being inactive. Although the official localization of in-game content and important social media releases in simplified or traditional Chinese has still maintained a stable operation conducted by Blizzard localization teams, the termination of the collaboration has led to a significant decline in the popularity and reputation of OW and OWL in China.

After the incident, many well-known Chinese OW esports players, streamers, and commentators have changed career paths due to the suspension of the official OWL esports streaming. Many Chinese gamers assert that their previous investments of time, money, and emotions have lost their value. After OW2 was officially collaboratively released on Steam on 11 August 2023, the public has witnessed an unprecedented number of negative reviews, ranking among the top list in terms of unfavorable feedback from Chinese Steam users in history.[1]

3. Literature review

Given the research focus on fan localization in media-based fan communities, a solid theoretical introduction to cross-field disciplines, including game localization, fan localization, and game community, serves as the cornerstone for this study. Besides, the theoretical foundation of methodology encompassing netnography and practice-led research is also illustrated.

3.1. Game localization and fan localization

The emergence of localization was observed in the early 1980s during the transition to the digital era (O'Hagan & Ashworth, 2002; O'Hagan, 2009). Localization is a broad concept, which involves localization of works in life concerning the language context shift (Esselink, 2003).

Game localization was originally derived from the need to distribute video games from a source language context to the target language context (Mangiron et al., 2014). Game localization refers to multi-dimensional localization, especially the transformation of game software developed in one country into a

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[1]. The release of *Overwatch 2* on Steam on 11 August 2023 aims to enhance its global distribution on a new platform, albeit significantly later than the official global publication of *Overwatch 2* on 5 October 2022.

target territory, and the localization works concern a wide range of linguistic, cultural, technical, sociological, and market-accessibility issues (Sánchez, 2009; Zhang, 2012; Bernal-Merino, 2014; Mangiron et al. 2014; Zoraqi & Kafi, 2023).

Fan localization, based on its lexical references, means "fan-conducted localization", which includes diverse practical ways such as fansubbing, fansdubbing, scanlation, and fan game localization (Vazquez-Calvo et al., 2019). For a historical period, fan localization has once raised heated debates on copyright issues, which caused the term with derogatory connotations concerning pirated games in certain circumstances. Conversely, society has also witnessed fans' contributions such as the modification of read-only memory (ROM) data to extend exposure to classic games (e.g., Sánchez, 2009).

3.2. Game community

A video game community is a collective of individuals, either online or offline, who are initially brought together by their basic interests in video games and related content (Nascimento et al., 2014). The shared interest encompasses not only video games but also a sense of belonging, integration, fulfillment of needs, as well as shared emotional connections (Saldanha et al., 2023).

The implementation of tailored global or local game community operations, based on localization requirements, constitutes a fundamental component for achieving commercial success for a video game (Ruggles et al., 2005; Kerr & Kelleher, 2015). Various models and operational strategies for game community management have been proposed (Ho & Huang, 2009). Video game developers are also encouraged to actively participate in online gaming communities to establish strong connections with gamers and promote distribution (Ruggles et al., 2005), or initialize the developer-community co-creation to enhance the reception (Bernal-Merino, 2016).

3.3. Netnography and practice-led research

Online communities give rise to or manifest cultures (Kozinets, 2015). The notion of a field site is thus decentralized, and specific themes serve as focal points that aggregate diverse online addresses, posts, individuals, and social groups (Belk & Kozinets, 2017, p. 12). Netnography has been a prominent contemporary ethnographic approach, which entails participatory observation through online fieldwork (Kozinets, 2015; Belk & Kozinets, 2017; Addeo et al., 2019).

For translation and interpreting studies, there has been a notable increase in innovative methodologies that surpass disciplinary boundaries to investigate the agents, or practices (Marin-Lacarta & Yu, 2023, p. 1). Scholars have discussed issues of netnography in translation studies, highlighting the investigation inquiry, informed consent, data management, relationship management (Huang et al., 2023), researcher-participant relationship, or subjectivity-objectivity balance (Lu & Lu, 2022).

Netnographic approaches provide abundant information through the detection of specialized websites, blogs, and internet forums (Mangiron, 2017, p. 89). Some researchers have creatively explored game

localization under netnographic frameworks, such as Karagöz (2021) on indie game localization Facebook group, Mangiron (2021) on SEGA's video game localization strategies and receptions, Dody M. H. Chen (2022) on the localization strategies of OWL Chinese streaming, Afzali and Zahiri (2022) on Iranian game players' translation needs.

Practice-led research states the researchers should ideally be the creators of the researched works, practices, or phenomena (Smith & Dean, 2009). Reflective and reflexive thoughts on the production, academically referred to as "exegesis", are indispensable and essential (Smith & Dean, 2009; McNamara, 2012), because the influences, ideas, decisions, materials, technologies, events, and theories can inspire, inform, constrain, or facilitate the process and production of the work (Candy, 2006). Unfortunately, practice-led research is rather rare in recent translation or interpreting studies, except for a few such as Öner (2013) on the professional improvement of translators, and Fernandes (2015) on the reflective analysis of practice-led translation of drama.

4. Method

In this project, ways of fan localization specifically refer to collecting social media releases about OW and OWL from English sources and offering localized versions in the Chinese media fandom. To examine the procedures, incentives, and potential issues, from April 2021 to December 2021, I documented my active participation in OW fan English-Chinese fan localization. Additionally, from August 2020 to April 2023, I used netnographic approaches to record fan localization works and establish multimodal corpora.

4.1. Practice-led research: The practice and exegesis

Initially, my practical engagement in fan localization was driven by fan interest voluntarily. As I delved deeper into the scholarly field, these practices have formed the research foundation.

I used two social media accounts to deliver my fan localization works. The first account is fully owned by me on Bilibili, a Chinese video-sharing and game-streaming platform, whose id is *honghuangshaonv chenduoduo* 洪荒少女陈多多 "Primordial Girl Chenduoduo" and the current subscribers are over 14,500. I have been using this account to upload a few videos featuring the introduction of the OW updates, and those English game slang terms used in OW game context, or OWL events.[2] All videos are freely accessible in the online public domain without any registration requirement.

The second account is on Sina Weibo, a Chinese social media and social networking service. It was called *ronghuo ziliao zhan* 熔火资料站 "Melting-fire Data Station", whose subscribers were about 60,000 at the end of the practice period. Originally, it was a social media account established by a group of voluntary fans dedicated to disseminating news about OW and OWL. Due to various factors, the account has changed its name and function, leading to its discontinuation of operations on fan localization.

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[2] For more information, please see the video collection: https://space.bilibili.com/2240801/channel/seriesdetail?sid=3595446

Furthermore, it has remained inactive for an extended period to date. From April 2021 to December 2021, I used it to release Chinese-localized social media releases on OW and OWL such as the localization of official English game news from Blizzard officials, or English fan posts on Reddit. The total number of localization-related releases has reached 2,000 pieces.[3] The social media management and localization works were exclusively undertaken by me during the practice period, which explicitly signifies my complete autonomy in the selection of localization sources and the production of the Chinese target versions. The data are readily accessible in the public domain without any registration requirement for viewing.

4.2. Netnography: Data collection and analysis

From August 2020 to April 2023, I observed the events of OW and OWL that highly triggered English-Chinese fan localization.

The total number of key events screened for this project amounts to 128, with each event deriving at least a piece of fan-made Chinese social media post and its English source. These game events, varying in scale and significance, are chronologically arranged. Certain events may trigger an extensive series of events and an abundance of social media posts (e.g., the termination of the Blizzard-NetEase cooperation).

Based on the temporal sequence of events, I systematically categorized and compiled multimodal corpora, as the modal display is expanded to include multimodal content, such as hyperlinks, or screenshots. To decrease potential ethical issues, fan localizers were anonymized, with a sole focus on localization strategies, or issues. Detailed annotations were added to record significant features such as the connotations of game slang terms, or the context. To monitor the dissemination of fan posts, the count of subscribers, comments, or retweets associated with fan localizers of a particular piece of data was recorded. Furthermore, typical or representative comments were recorded, coded, and anonymized. Last, the related social media releases by OW Chinese game officials or verified OW Chinese official localizers were collected, if available, to form a control group.

5. Findings and discussion

This chapter offers a systematic overview of fan localization on social media releases about OW and OWL. It not only elucidates the fan localization procedures and incentives but also sheds light on prominent contradictions and involved stakeholders.

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[3] The nomenclature and the function of the account have undergone a series of modifications owing to functional adjustments by fan group members. Nevertheless, all my localized content remains preserved in the timeline of social media releases from April 2021 to December 2021. For more information, please see: https://www.weibo.com/u/3953818744

5.1. Incentive: From self-motivations to social-media fandom hierarchy

Fan localization or fan translation distinguishes itself from other non-professional localization or translation, such as volunteer translation (Evans, 2019), because fan localization focuses specifically on popular culture (O'Hagan, 2009; O'Brien, 2011). Like fansubbing or fansdubbing, the vast majority of English-Chinese fan localization on social media releases about OW and OWL is not primarily motivated by direct monetary gain, but about loving, spreading, popularizing, and learning to a popular domain (Wang & Zhang, 2017).

The social media account to release the localized content can be owned by either individuals or groups. Moreover, it can be a personal social media account that mixes the fan localizer's authentic experiences and identities (e.g., selfies, educational background) with fan localization practices, or even an anonymous one that solely provides fan localization releases. Intriguingly, a prevalent strategy for managing social media accounts is observed, involving the establishment of fictitious identities on platforms to attract a broader community. In this respect, although a team of fan localizers may be involved in the localization process, their public image is consistently uniform and fictionalized, which facilitates the resolution of staffing issues within the localization group and centralizes the public attention to a fictionalized figure to get rid of potential criticism of specific personnel.

Social media platforms offer fan localizers an avenue to cultivate a dedicated group of subscribers for their social media accounts. Especially due to a standing national ban on access to many non-Chinese websites enforced by the Chinese government since 2009, the majority of the OW Chinese community lacks access to pertinent information on English social media. To this end, numerous sub-fandoms have been gradually established within the wider range of the OW Chinese large fandom, whose shared interests are not only targeted to fan localizers' dissemination, localization, and explanation of OW or OWL information but also involve almost all aspects of fan localizers.

Consequently, community members may develop a sense of affiliation, reverence, or devotion towards specific fan localizers (Groene & Hettinger, 2016), and these fan localizers gradually acquire the status of so-called "fan celebrities". This instance echoes McCudden (2011) that authority, investment, cultural capital, and social capital are approaches to fandom hierarchy. The observation on the OW Chinese fandom hierarchy extensively highlights that the distinctive features of fan localizers lie in their ability to provide a greater amount of content to the local community. In this context, it is plausible that the hierarchical structure and reputation within fandom, predominantly virtual but inevitably accompanied by substantial feedback, may exert influence on the genuine intention underlying fan localization. Furthermore, it should be noted that the fandoms for specific fan localizers may potentially lead to the misuse of fan influence and raise hatred toward game officials, particularly in social contexts where certain sub-fandoms hold opposing views to those endorsed by game officials. In OW Chinese history, cases have been widely reflected in fan localization, whose content is about the Blizzard-NetEase cooperation end.

Significantly, the implementation of incentive policies on social media platforms for information dissemination and interactions can effectively facilitate the spread of fan localization and reinforce the existing hierarchy within fandom. Taking Sina Weibo as an example, despite the limited subscriber scale of some fan localizers, leveraging keyword search, trending topics, hashtags, and popularity metrics such as likes or reposts can effectively expose the content to a wider range of audiences, enhancing the influence and reputation of fan localizers. Conversely, the dissemination of social media platforms also enables unrestricted modification or substitution in localized versions, thereby raising concerns about the reliability of the content, even though some fan localizers exercise caution to avoid errors and openly acknowledge the limitations.

Interestingly, even though the popularity and reputation of OW or OWL have recently largely declined in contrast to its peak state, attention from some dedicated Chinese OW fans is still gathered about the English content of whether the new partnership will be established between Chinese companies and Blizzard. This observation extends O'Hagan (2009) and O'Brien (2011) on the correlation between fan localization and the popularity of the culture. It further suggests that incentives for fan localization of a popular domain constitute a dynamic and time-effective field.

5.2. The procedure: Three stages

There are generally three stages for utilizing social media platforms to post localized social media releases from English to Chinese about OW or OWL.

The first stage is to situate and select the information source from the English context. As previously introduced, the sources of information are diverse, involving official publications, fan forums, and almost every space and corner of the Internet. In this case, fan localizers usually frequently engage in participatory observation of specific English social media platforms such as Twitter or Reddit to discern valuable trends for localization purposes. On the other hand, it is important to align with the social media positioning of the fan-established account and cater to local audiences' preferences, which may, in turn, help fan localizers screen localized sources. In the OW Chinese community, the public has witnessed a few social media accounts that offer localized content catering to specific needs, such as the localization of news related to a specific OWL team or the translation of Reddit fan comments about game updates.

Commonly, fan localizers, due to their voluntary manners, own significant autonomy and exhibit a certain degree of randomness in their selection of the source content. Moreover, a few fan localizers may prioritize the localization of messages related to heated events to enhance the Internet exposure of their releases, such as the Blizzard sexual harassment scandal, or incidents of esports players' controversial expressions in live streaming. This selection of information, driven by the proliferation of social media and the corresponding surge in fan engagement, can also garner increased popularity for fan localizers.

The second stage is to localize the source content obtained via the Internet to the target language. Since the source information is usually presented in various forms on social media such as simple text, image

with text, or video that contains sounds, texts, and images, fan localizers should devise a strategic approach to ensure and enhance appropriate audiovisual localization (Taylor, 2013; Pérez-González, 2019). The following examples underscore the potential of utilizing multi-modal information sources to facilitate fan localization and enhance content creation. Furthermore, meticulous deliberation of fan localizers is reflected regarding the modal representation of the localized version, particularly about the *Skopos* and the reception.

First, since lots of people may discuss the source of the localized content, fan localizers usually post a screenshot or hyperlink of the source and attach the localized version in parallel. To a certain extent, this approach also serves the purpose of getting rid of the responsibilities of fan localizers in verifying the authenticity of the source, as the clarification of the source can establish a direct connection between the audience and its original context.

Furthermore, for content with a high potential to go viral on the Internet, fan localizers may exhibit a greater inclination towards utilizing non-textual formats for disseminating their localized versions. This can involve transforming the textual content into an image or video format, accompanied by a watermark reflecting the name of the localizer or platform. Furthermore, copyright protection measures implemented by the social media platform are frequently leveraged. These strategies can enhance the audience's cognition of the ownership of the fan localization while reducing instances of secondary dissemination through text replication.

Third, in the case of unlocalized content that incorporates multiple semiotic modes such as videos, certain fan localizers employ strategies like subtitling or voice-over in Chinese to enhance the reception of the content within the Chinese context. Conventionally, numerous transformative works are widely disseminated without copyright restraints (Pearson, 2010; Wang & Zhang, 2017). Controversially, depending on the timing of the initial release of fan localization online and the degree of similarity in specific content, it may potentially give rise to a multitude of ownership disputes in the fandom.

The final stage involves releasing the localized content on social media. The public demand on social media releases about OW or OWL exhibits the extreme attribute of immediacy, such as social media posts of esports players following live events or online fandom debates about contentious topics. Even in cross-linguistic contexts, certain Chinese fans actively seek immediate access to real-time localized information from English sources, preferably without any discernible delay. This has largely been in line with timeliness in the construction of newsworthiness (Bednarek, 2016).

To cater to the demands of the community and enhance the visibility of localized content on the Internet, fan localizers are typically expected to commence their work promptly upon online publication of the source material. Therefore, it is common to see fan localizers work late into the night to produce and disseminate localized messages, especially when the official releases of OW or OWL in English often coincide with late-night hours in China due to the time difference between China and the USA. In certain exceptional scenarios, the fan localizers may live stream the English press conference of OW or OWL

and promptly provide streaming commentaries using a consecutive interpreting approach to facilitate streaming spectators' perception of the non-localized content.

Interestingly, it is a common practice for OW fan localizers to openly acknowledge their inability to effectively handle the localization of certain game slang or unfamiliar cultural connotations. In Zhang and Cassany (2020), the correction, modification, and discussion of netizens with fan localization or translation works can be discerned from comments, and a similar case is also observed in many OW Chinese fan releases. In this scenario, the task of fan localizers is not expected as localization, but rather it entails accurately transmitting the unlocalized information from the source context to the target community in time. On the Internet, individuals with translation expertise often provide detailed explanations in comments and reposts when encountering such content. For subsequent audiences, the version they receive on social media represents a collaborative effort, showcased through interactions on social media platforms (Zhang & Cassany, 2020). Consequently, perusing the comments section to gauge an overall opinion has become a customary practice among netizens towards fan localization.

5.3. Controversial issues

Ideally, fan localization can disseminate desired information within the local OW community, thereby generating attention and fostering community development. However, fan localization also gives rise to numerous issues in the fandom, and the advent of social media has expanded the impact of issues to a broader spectrum of stakeholders. The following presents three types of issues, including the authenticity of the information, the quality of fan localization, and the subjective consciousness of fan localizers.

5.3.1. Authenticity of the information

According to the prevailing understanding among OW fandom, "official releases" specifically refer to content that is published by game companies on their official website or official social media channels, which ensures comparative accuracy, especially in contrast to the inauthentic news that is widely popular in fandom. Any official release should align with in-game updates and business collaborations, and any premature release can potentially lead to content disclosure, resulting in unpredictable side consequences to the game or events. Widely observed, the public's expectations for certain game designs, content, or collaborative projects have boosted the proliferation of unsubstantiated rumors with inaccurate details of OW2 (e.g., the release date, the game design) in global fandom before OW2 was officially released on 5 October 2022.

Falsehoods spread significantly further, faster, deeper, and more broadly than truths across all categories of information (Vosoughi et al., 2018). Once these OW or OWL rumors are transmitted from one community to the other through the localization and dissemination of fans, the novel information will divert focus from its source and undermine its authenticity (Pierri & Ceri, 2019). Significant backlashes may arise against relevant stakeholders due to their failure to achieve the non-stated missions (Laato & Rauti, 2021). The corresponding online feedback, predominantly consisting of criticism, is frequently

observed in comments for verified open-access social media accounts owned by the OW or OWL Chinese officials such as the localization manager or the official esports commentators. Owing to contractual obligations, their ability to refute the rumors is typically constrained.

Meanwhile, it is undeniable that the allure of disseminating fabricated information also captivates online audiences and boosts online subscriptions in the short term, especially when such dissemination can not only offer virtual but also substantial feedback. For instance, video viewing and user engagement on Bilibili videos can be converted into RMB (the official currency of the People's Republic of China) as a form of social media earning. In this scenario, employing unverified materials to generate appealing content and enhance viewership appears as a potential seductive approach, although there are still conscientious fan localizers who rely on verified sources with explicit references to generate comparatively impartial remarks.

Fan localizers have a high level of autonomy in selecting sources, which implies that the assessment of source validity to disseminate is entirely self-dependent. A decentralization within the information dissemination is witnessed, wherein the public is empowered and encouraged to make their judgments on the authenticity. However, the allure of social media exposure and the pursuit of fame in the fandom may affect the generation and dissemination of information.

5.3.2. Localization quality

The field of fan-conducted translation and localization has emerged as a domain of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006). The quality of fan localization has been a subject of academic debate for years, with numerous studies on online communities (e.g., O'Hagan, 2012; Wang & Zhang, 2017; Zhang & Cassany, 2020). Given the nature of fan localization in this project, wherein fan participation is accessible to a wide range of individuals with diverse localization skills and backgrounds, there exists a notable degree of volatility in the level of fan localization quality.

High-quality fan localization has the potential to boost the information flow across different language contexts, provide knowledge, enhance community engagement, and stimulate greater participation in a virtuous cycle (O'Hagan, 2009; O'Hagan, 2012). However, a significant contradiction arises in that the scarcity of talent and labor can lead to a diminished amount of feedback received by localizers, thereby impeding their ability to refine their versions. Additionally, inadequate preparation time or lack of source check or proofreading may compromise the finesse of the localized version. To such an extent, if localization errors like mistranslation or omission are propagated within the OW Chinese community through social media, it can inevitably lead to dramatic consequences that undermine the stakeholders involved in the fan-localized works, and cause fandom conflicts.

At the end of each OWL annual season, selected players with outstanding esports performances are honored, and the most prominent and distinctive person is awarded the Most Valuable Player (MVP). According to the official statement for the 2023 OWL MVP, fan votes make up 25% of the overall tally,

with the other 75% coming from a combination of OWL teams, broadcast talents, and media.[4] Since the inaugural election of the OWL MVP in 2018, the fan vote for the MVP title has become a carnival for fans around the world. Within the global media and communities, advocates of a specific OWL player or the team actively engage in promoting and fostering increased participation in voting for their preferred candidates. Furthermore, this promotional approach of fan voting also places the players under scrutiny, enabling the public to actively count not only their valuable esports talents but also their public behaviors, ideology, and even political stances as motivations for votes. The broad and arbitrary nature of fan voting implies that any inappropriate behavior exhibited by the candidates can exert a significant influence on the outcome of the election.

Huang "Leave" Xin, the former Chinese OWL player of Team Chengdu Hunters and the 2021 OWL MVP, has been severely blamed by some netizens for his Chinese voice chats with teammates in an OWL battle round before the election. Many interesting voice communications of OWL players in OWL battles are produced as video programs due to the fans' demands. One of Leave's voice chats on a controversial complaint is accidentally included. In a round, after he was dramatically killed by Dong-eon "Fits" Kim, a Korean OWL player of Team Seoul Dynasty, Leave said in Chinese, "*Fits de maike lei, tamade jixing le* Fits 的麦克雷他妈的畸形了" to his teammates. Table 1 shows two distinct fan-localized versions of his expressions from Chinese to English. TT1 has, for a time, caused a lot of disputes for Leave in the English community, as it is a literally translated version of the Chinese expression, showing a creepy, uncivilized, and aggressive attitude to curse the involvers. However, TT1 is incorrect and ambiguous as it fails to explain the specific game slang terms commonly used by Chinese gamers in the game context. In contrast, the game-based connotations in a Chinese game context are accurately elucidated by TT2.

Table 1. Two translated versions

ST (Chinese)	**Fits** 的	麦克雷	他妈的	畸形了
Chinese Pinyin Pronunciation	Fits de	Maike lei	tamade	jixing le
TT1 (English)	Fits'	McCree	(is) his mother's	malformation
TT2 (English)	Fits'	McCree	(is) fucking	abnormal or awesome

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[4] For more information about OWL MVP, please see: https://overwatchleague.com/en-us/mvp

Annotation	Kim "Fits" Dong-eun is a South Korean player who was playing for Team Seoul Dynasty and Team New York Excelsior in OWL.	Jesse McCree was the name of a hero in OW. The name was changed to Cole Cassidy in October 2021.	他妈的 is equivalent to "fucking" in connotation. Both in Chinese and English, they are more like an adverb that describes the intensity of emotions or assertions without conveying their literal meaning.	畸形了 in the Chinese game context has two connotations. First, it describes someone's unexpectedly excellent gameplay as if it were not done by a normal human. Second, it describes that a person's gameplay is unreasonably bad as if it were made by a stupid machine. This case represents the first situation.

The translation of *tamade* and *jixing le* has been a topic of extensive discussion within the English community before the 2021 MVP election. Controversially, concerning the Chinese game context, Leave's expressions are comparatively common and acceptable. Explicitly discussed by Sherry Yong Chen (2014), the Chinese swearing phrase *tamade* and its Pinyin acronym, TMD, are widely used for online communication. Furthermore, the perception and definition may transform, potentially diminishing users' recognition of the adverse impact of impolite language in everyday situations (Sherry Yong Chen, 2014). Besides, *jixing le*, under this circumstance, is used to praise Fits' extraordinary gameplay to kill Leave in a dramatic scene.

During Leave's engagement in the game, these words have acquired specific connotations. Individuals who possess a deep understanding of the Chinese game context may demonstrate both familiarity and proficiency in comprehending these slang terms, perceiving them as intriguing despite their lack of politeness in their original connotations (Strong, 2019; Dody M. H. Chen, 2022). This may further hint at the reasons why, in the stage of program production, the relevant personnel failed to distinguish and evaluate the potential reception issues of Leave's expressions in wider non-game and non-Chinese contexts. Considering the diverse age groups and language backgrounds of the global audience, Leave's

expressions in the video could have been revised or modified via subtitles to indicate the connotation. Ultimately, gamers with proper translation skills were dedicated to offering explicit explanations of the connotations to global communities, thereby reducing the negative impact of this incident.

The loss of connotation and contextual understanding of fan localization can have profound negative consequences like expanding panic or hostility towards certain stakeholders, especially when the specific content is amplified through social media to influence fandom reception and public opinion.

5.3.3. Fan localizers' subjectivity

Robinson (2001, pp. 2-3) notes that translators are never the original authors of the content, however, they draw on their own experiences of language and the world to formulate effective discourse. One of the widely used techniques for fan translation to embed subjectivity is *tucao* 吐槽, which originally refers to a fansubbing and subtitling strategy that embeds translators' humorous comments in subtitles or as translators' notes (Lu & Lu, 2021). Within broader scopes of research such as communication and media studies, the concept of *tucao* has transcended its original context in fan translation and encompassed any comments that reflect an individual's ideas, thoughts, or complaints (Hsiao, 2015). *Tucao*, according to the fan localization on OW and OWL social media posts, can manifest in the appellation assigned to a specific game character, or the subjective description of an objective statement about game events or news.

There are numerous cases of *tucao* in the appellation of game characters in fan localizers' posts. For instance, since DoomFist (*mori tiequan* 末日铁拳 "doomsday iron fist"), a male game character, has no hair with dark brown skin, a Chinese nickname of *ludan* 卤蛋 "marinated egg" has thus been popular to refer to him. This slightly mocking and humorous epithet is not initially meant to satire his race or appearance, especially when specific expressions in game contexts are often rendered intriguing (Strong, 2019; Dody M. H. Chen, 2022). Upon reading the message of fan localizers' use of *ludan*, the audience may reinforce the impression of the association with the appellation and the appearance of the character, and better sense the in-joke. Moreover, a few people may find it attractive, thereby creating a sense of similarity and belonging with fan localizers.

Controversially, as the influence of fan localizers gradually becomes established and expanded to form a specific sub-fandom of their own, the subjectivity inherent in the localized version may impact how ordinary community members perceive specific social events upon reception.

In July 2021, the public witnessed the lawsuit against Activision Blizzard by California's Department of Fair Employment and Housing for harassment and discrimination against female employees, which significantly influenced the trajectory of Blizzard's history. Compared with Chinese media outlets, English social media platforms frequently offered comprehensive reports on the matter, serving as the primary platform for updating information. To track the latest release, Chinese fan localizers have been actively engaged in monitoring global trends, localizing relevant reports, and providing self-made

explanations through a plethora of videos or articles. Within China's social media landscape, a multitude of fan perspectives emerged on the debate of certain issues.

In a series of lawsuit-related reports published by reputable English media outlets, the names of certain Blizzard employees are mentioned, who may not be well-known to most Chinese readers. A Chinese fan localizer with tens of thousands of fans once referred to a female former OW producer who expressed her stances about this issue as *pen jie* 喷姐 "an elder sister who sprays". This so-called "nickname" has nothing to do with the person's real name, but it is embedded with a weird, impolite Chinese connotation.

Pen jie 喷姐 is a two-Chinese-characters appellation. *Pen* 喷 "spray" is to express something gushing out, like liquids or words. *Pen ren* 喷人 "spray people" is a famous Chinese Internet slang, which means to curse people usually with no evidence. Besides, *jie* 姐 "sister" is to describe a female who is older than the speaker. The appellation can leave a preconceived impact on the audience that this female has proposed something inappropriate in advance. Noteworthy, in the same fan post, some other OW male leaders involved in the controversy retain the literal translation of their full English name or first name.

The translation approach diverges from the faithfulness of the original text, particularly in terms of gender representation (Arrojo, 1994) to a specific gender-related social event, thereby causing a preconceived notion of the subject. The consequences can be significantly severe when specific fan localizers accumulate a substantial number of followers or establish reputations within the community, akin to being "celebrities", as some of their dedicated supporters may trust their subjective assertions (Collisson et al., 2018). The Internet offers a cost-free and competitive platform for fan localization. However, the audience of fan localization must exercise their critical thinking abilities when evaluating the information.

6. Conclusion

This study sheds light on the practices of fan localization within the OW Chinese game community, whose localization source is focused on diversified English social media releases. The findings address the research questions outlined in the methodology part, including why and how fan localizers adapt themselves to localizing social media releases, and what the potential issues and conflicts are concerning fan localization.

The localization, as well as the re-creation of fans, can be considered a multifaceted and multimodal practice, encompassing diverse audiovisual translation skills. Significantly, the incorporation of fan features and stances with the transmission capacity of social media constitutes a pivotal source for certain disputes. Failure of the fan localizers to investigate the authenticity, the lack of localization quality, and the inclusion of personal emotions and biases, can result in multiple conflicts through the exposure of the Internet and the enhancement of fandom.

The significance and limitations of this project are both primarily constrained by the innovative methodology and the selected cases. While practice-led approaches and netnographic methods have

limited the trajectory and substantiation of findings, the utilization also underscores the necessity to embrace diverse research methodologies and frameworks in the digital age.

From a theoretical standpoint, this article elucidates the multifaceted nature of game localization and underscores its potential integration with social media fandom to further create localization works related to video games. Furthermore, it delves deeper into the intricate interplay between game localization, audiovisual translation, and game communities. It is a practical and research breakthrough, echoing Díaz-Cintas and Massidda (2019) that academic research should explore the significant transformation of audiovisual works by extending academic cognition into new media forms, technical tools, user behaviors, and relationships with communication and translation.

Future research may encompass the comparison between fan localization and official localization on a specific video game or esports domain, the reception of certain fan localized social media works, and the sense of being celebrities of fan localizers.

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Ludography

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About the author

Dody M. H. Chen is a PhD Student in game localization at University College London. With multiple identities such as a video creator and game reviewer, she aims to acquaint the public with game localization theories while examining the research significance of social media's impact on game localization.

Athletes' Personal Branding on Social Media: A Case Study of Eileen Gu during the 2022 Beijing Olympics

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Abstract

This study examines how athletes use social media to shape and promote their personal brand, employing the case of Eileen Gu, a Chinese American skier who won three medals at the 2022 Beijing Olympics on behalf of China. Employing a content analysis methodology, the present research explores the evolution of Eileen Gu's personal brand and the molding of her media image through a comparative examination of her Instagram and Sina Weibo posts before and after the 2022 Beijing Olympics. In addition, grounded in semiotics theory, the study identifies key themes and patterns within Eileen Gu's social media content. Eileen Gu's narrative serves as a pertinent context for exploring the dynamics of personal brand development within the intersection of sports and social media. By examining the personal branding strategies of Eileen Gu on different social media platforms, the present study provides unique opportunities and interactions in transnational athletes' personal branding processes.

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1. Introduction

Social media platforms have assumed a paramount role in the daily lives of both individuals and organizations, serving as invaluable conduits for dissemination of information, ideas, interests, and diverse forms of expression as well as facilitating interactions to achieve diverse objectives (Chen, 2023). Celebrities, particularly athletes, have embraced social media for communication, with the platform becoming integral for some athletes to attain global sports stardom (Korzynski & Paniagua, 2016). The utilization of social media enables sports stars to extend their reach and connect more closely with their fan base through various means, such as posting photos and videos, engaging in interactions, promoting brands and products, and sharing personal insights (Abeza et al., 2017; Lee & Koo, 2015; Thompson et al., 2018). This engagement not only fosters a stronger bond with fans but also contributes to higher financial rewards, ultimately enhancing and diversifying their personal brands. In most cases, athletes with more glory or athletes engaged in sports with a wider audience are prone to wider media coverage and a greater social media presence. However, sports performance is not the unique ingredient in a sports star's market value. Less talented players who actively engage in social media can also attract millions of fans and benefit from the ensuing exorbitant contracts, while some champion athletes do not have a commercial endorsement contract in line with their status. This illustrates that social media has evolved into an additional field for athletes to compete.

Sports mega-events, such as the Olympics, draw substantial global attention, intertwining the realms of economy, politics, culture, and social life to showcase sport as a universal language (Kobayashi et al., 2023). Moreover, the use of athletic competition to draw in enormous amounts of attention, primarily through global media coverage, creates a space where the eyes of the world are solely on these athletes. For instance, the Olympics are one of the few occasions that could concentrate global attention in one location. At the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing, Eileen Gu made history by winning two golds and one silver for China. In addition, the female skier has seen a spring in her commercial endorsements off the track, with Eileen Gu having been the spokesperson for over 27 brands before and after the Beijing Winter Olympics, with a total endorsement fee of over 100 million RMB (21st Century Business Review, 2022).

In October 2022, Forbes published a list of the "world's highest-paid female athletes". In this list, Eileen Gu was ranked third behind Naomi Osaka and Serena Williams (Birnbaum, 2022). Apart from her performance on the field, Gu has an impressive social media presence. By the end of the Winter Olympics on the 20th, February 2022, her "Weibo Super Topic (微博超话)" reading volume had reached more than 9 billion. This paper aims to explore Eileen Gu's social media posts, focusing on two key questions:

1) What image does Gu create on Sina Weibo and Instagram?

2) What explicit or implicit communication strategies does she employ to brand herself?

Employing content analysis and drawing on semiotics theory, the study analyzes Gu's social media posts before and after the 2022 Beijing Olympics (2022.1.1-2022.3.1), aiming to delineate the nuances between her domestic and international communication strategies.

2. Literature review

2.1. Personal branding of athletes

The term "brand" conventionally pertains to products, services, or corporations, yet marketers have posited that any perceptible image and identity can be construed as a brand (Zarkada, 2012). Individuals endowed with well-defined public images, such as artists, politicians, and scholars, stand to derive advantages from the recognition of their distinctive attributes as brands. Analogous to the principles of product branding, individual branding entails the amalgamation of associated attributes, images, and distinctions (Parmentier & Fischer, 2012). Within this framework, athletes, characterized by their widespread popularity and conspicuous recognition as individuals (Carlson & Donavan, 2008), have long been acknowledged as human brands (Carlson & Donavan, 2013; Han et al., 2021). This acknowledgment is predicated on their unique attributes, which have the potential to engender enduring emotional connections with fans over the course of a lifetime (Kwon & Trail, 2001).

Integrating an individual with a brand, athlete brands transcend conventional commercialized offerings to manifest as intricate social entities (Osorio et al., 2020). As posited by Bredikhina et al. (2023), this social embeddedness, encompassing a network of social relations and connections, manifests across various strata, encompassing societal beliefs and norms, brand networks, and interpersonal relationships (Collins et al., 2010). Notably, athletes' appearances and conduct undergo meticulous scrutiny vis-à-vis societal norms and structures such as gender or race (Cunningham & Regan, 2012; Fink et al., 2012). The intrinsic value of their brand is interlinked with other brands within their network (Kunkel & Biscaia, 2020), while aspects of their private lives, including romantic relationships, captivate public interest (Centeno & Wang, 2017).

The branding of athletes holds paramount significance due to their dual roles as both personal and social heroes to their fan base (Ilicic & Webster, 2015). Athletes endowed with a well-established brand can reap benefits not only during the tenure of their sports careers but also in the post-retirement phase (Arai et al., 2014). Although tournaments and competitive events serve as primary platforms for showcasing athletes, the construction of their personal brands predominantly occurs off the field (Sharifzadeh et al., 2021). Existing research indicates that strategic marketing efforts can significantly influence athlete brands (Kunkel et al., 2022), with social media emerging as a pivotal tool in shaping and enhancing the brand image of athletes (Cocco et al., 2023; Pazmino & Pack, 2023; Park et al., 2020).

2.2. Athletes' personal branding via social media

Social media serves as a potent tool for organizations to articulate and convey a specific brand image, arguably rendering it the foremost branding instrument available to sport organizations today (Abeza et al., 2015). Beyond its significance for sport leagues, teams, and events, social media platforms provide unprecedented opportunities for athletes to cultivate, establish, and promote their personal brands (Geurin, 2017). As highlighted by Parmentier et al. (2013), strategically positioning and presenting a personal brand through an apt communication channel, such as social media, is imperative for effective branding. This strategic deployment, when executed proficiently, can contribute to the construction of a robust brand image (Keller, 2009), heightened brand awareness, and the generation of potential business prospects, including endorsement deals (Bruhn et al., 2012), brand extensions, and licensing contracts (Agyemang & Williams, 2016).

Contrary to the misconception that athletes' social media accounts predominantly focus on sports-related content, many posts encompass diverse themes such as humanitarian initiatives, family dynamics, personality traits, interests, dedication to their athletic pursuits, endorsements, and social engagements (Smith & Sanderson, 2015). Athletes leverage social media for multifaceted purposes, including information sharing, fan interaction (Hambrick & Kang, 2015), marketing and endorsement activities (Eagleman, 2013), as well as managing connections with consumers to augment their brand awareness (Williams et al., 2015). Marshall (2010) underscores the unprecedented capacity of social media to facilitate self-presentation for sports celebrities, enabling more personalized and audience-pressure-free activities in this realm (Twomey & O'Reilly, 2017; Buzeta et al., 2020). A wealth of literature on personal branding and social media attests to the effective utilization of online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter by athletes (Cocco et al., 2023; Green, 2016; Hambrick et al., 2010; Park et al., 2020; Sharifzadeh et al., 2021). However, as noted by Park et al. (2020), there exists a gap in athlete knowledge regarding personal branding via social media, with limited scholarly attention directed towards the exploration of athletes' strategies for branding through these platforms.

2.3. Semiotic theory and athletes' self-presentation

According to Peirce (1977), a symbol is only a symbol if it can be interpreted as such, and the meaning of the sign can be infinite. Sports stars, as icons on the first plane of signs, represent something to someone in some manner, and through the process of constructing meaning, they progressively alter their meaning from being merely associated with sports to other conceptualizations. This is reflected in Roland Barthes' connotation and denotation theory, where the meaning of a sign is created through layers of superimposition. Meanwhile, social media has given rise to a new form of celebrity representation that can be analyzed through the lens of Goffman's (1959) self-presentation theory.

Self-presentation is delineated as a mechanism through which individuals strategically communicate desired information to others. In contemporary society, personal websites and social media platforms have emerged as pivotal conduits for individuals to articulate and showcase facets of their identity. A pervasive

inclination exists wherein individuals endeavor to present themselves to a global audience by accentuating specific dimensions of their identity that align with societal expectations and elicit favorable responses. This inclination is underpinned by the fundamental notion that individuals meticulously select how to portray themselves, engaging in both frontstage performances and backstage conversations, thus conceptualizing social interactions as a nuanced form of theatrical expression (Goffman, 1959).

Celebrities, including sports figures, employ social media platforms as strategic tools to meticulously curate and manage their public image, tailoring presentations to suit diverse audiences and contexts (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016; Hayes Sauder & Blaszka, 2018; Litchfield & Kavanagh, 2019). Symbolic interactionism contributes significantly to the symbolic construction of celebrities on social media, wherein individuals actively regulate the perceptions and evaluations of others while meticulously managing their online image to project desired characteristics. This phenomenon is intricately linked to the concept of personal branding, which has gained prominence in the digital era. Notably, athletes heavily leverage social media platforms to establish and cultivate their professional brand (Shreffler et al., 2016). The multifaceted presentation of symbolic elements on social media, coupled with direct engagement with fans, affords athletes the opportunity to construct and fortify their distinctive personal brand.

3. Method

In seeking to comprehend the distinctiveness and functionality of each element within a particular context, the case study emerges as a widely employed methodology for in-depth analysis of phenomena and hypothesis testing across various domains of knowledge. Eileen Gu's unprecedented influence during the 2022 Beijing Olympic Games renders her social media presence uniquely significant. Notably, she exhibits a dual facet: a robust impact as a public figure and an unusually substantial commercial value, a characteristic less commonly associated with athletes in winter sports. Consequently, we have chosen to scrutinize Eileen Gu's social media platforms as a case study, recognizing its profound research significance in unraveling the intricate interplay between her personal brand, social media impact, and commercial value.

In accordance with Krippendorff (2019, p. 2), content analysis is characterized as a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use. It serves as a valuable method for systematically and objectively describing the content of communication in various forms and elucidating social discourse by discerning recurrent concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Schettini & Cortazzo, 2015). Within the content analysis framework, semiotic analysis is employed to explore both quantitative and qualitative relationships within a group of symbols. The comprehension of celebrities' representation on social media is facilitated through the lens of signification, allowing for a nuanced exploration of the meanings and symbolic constructs embedded in their online presence.

To facilitate the development and application of the Content Analysis method, the following phases have been systematically pursued:

3.1. Phase 1: Sample selection

To discern the prevailing frames of Eileen Gu's social media presence during the 2022 Beijing Olympics, posts from both Instagram and Sina Weibo were compiled. As of the end of 2019, global social media users surpassed 2.82 billion, with Instagram boasting a monthly active user base of 1 billion (Hootsuite and We Are Social, 2020), solidifying its status as one of the world's most active platforms. Notably, among visual-centric platforms, Instagram garnered significant attention and played an indispensable role in disseminating information globally (Lunden, 2014; Mañas-Viniegra et al., 2019). Meanwhile, Weibo secured its position among the top 10 most utilized social media platforms globally, registering 73 million average active users per month in China as of June 2022 (Hootsuite and We Are Social, 2023). Serving as a representative social media platform in China, Weibo often features a plethora of celebrities' pictures, emojis, metaphors, and other irrelevant information, contributing to its multifaceted nature that extends beyond the specific content it aims to propagate (Wu, 2023).

To comprehensively capture the dynamics surrounding the 2022 Olympic Games, the present study extends beyond the two-week competition window, encompassing both the preparatory phase and the aftermath of the Games. Consequently, the timeframe for the analysis spans from January 1, 2022, to March 1, 2022. Within this duration, Eileen Gu published a total of 24 posts on Sina Weibo and 18 posts on Instagram, forming the basis of the examination.

Table 1. Criteria of sample selection

Database	Instagram and Sina Weibo
Period	1st. January 2022 – 1st. March 2022.
Search time	March 2023
Screening results	42 (24 posts of Sina Weibo and 18 posts of Instagram)
Final results	39 (21 posts of Sina Weibo and 18 posts of Instagram)

3.2. Phase 2: Organization and codification

Building upon the methodologies of data collection and analysis, the study systematically delved into Eileen Gu's social media engagements on both Instagram and Weibo. Initially, the metrics of comments, reposts, and likes were meticulously recorded and compared. This quantitative foundation was then complemented by a thorough examination of the qualitative characteristics inherent in her posts. Subsequently, employing a coding scheme, the posts were systematically categorized based on their content, enabling nuanced comparisons between the two platforms. Employing an inductive approach, the analysis encompassed a total of 42 posts, excluding three posts published through Weibo's proprietary

system. Finally, a distinction was made, and classification ensued for 18 Instagram posts and 21 Weibo posts, centered on their unique informational and interactive attributes.

4. Results

4.1 Analysis of social media

4.1.1. Basic data of social media accounts

Eileen Gu, the renowned Chinese freestyle skier, has established her online presence by creating accounts on three major social media platforms within China, namely "Douyin" (抖音), "Xiaohongshu" (小红书), and Weibo. Of the three, Weibo is her earliest registered account, which she has actively maintained over an extended period. A noteworthy aspect of Eileen Gu's online presence is her Instagram account, "Eileen_gu", which boasts an impressive 1.793 million followers and follows 1236 accounts. On the other hand, her Weibo account, bearing the name "Frog Princess Eileen," has accumulated a significant number of fans, reaching 6.546 million. However, she followed only 110 accounts. Eileen Gu's Weibo account features only one hashtag, "Freestyle Skiing World Champion", compared to Instagram, where she employs several tags, including "2022 Olympic 2 gold medals and 1 silver medal," "IMG Models Worldwide," "Time 100 & Forbes 30 under 30," and "Stanford '26", which offer insights into her diverse range of identities and achievements.

Table 2. Social media account basic information

	Sina Weibo	Instagram
Account name	"青蛙公主爱凌"	Eileen_gu_
Followers	654.6 M	179.3M
Following	110	1236
Personal Label	"Freestyle Skiing World Champion"	"2022 Olympic 2 gold medals and 1 silver medal", "IMG Models Worldwide", "Time 100 & Forbes 30 under 30", "Stanford '26"

4.1.2. Posts' content classification

From January to March 2023, Eileen Gu shared a combined total of 21 posts on her Weibo account and 18 posts on her Instagram account. A conceptual model of athlete brand image is developed by Arai et al. (2014), incorporating three key dimensions: athletic performance, attractive appearance, and marketable lifestyle. In accordance with Guan (2017), social profiles of sports stars typically feature content falling into several categories, including characteristics of competitions and work status, personal life updates,

commercial and advertising endeavors, community service initiatives, and popular comments (Lyu et al., 2023). To classify and tally her posts, a tagging system consisting of the following categories: "competition and Training", "personal life", "commercial activity and advertising", and "community service" was implemented.

Table 3. Categories of social media posting content

Social Media	Competition and Training	Personal Life	Commercial Activity and Advertising	Community Service
Instagram	14	7	3	3
Sina Weibo	11	2	11	1

Based on the data collected from a specified time frame, it is evident that Eileen Gu's Instagram posts predominantly revolve around "competition and training", constituting 14 of the tags used during the selected period. Subsequently, content related to her personal life and community service initiatives also holds prominence. In contrast, commercial activities and advertising represent the least frequent theme, accounting for only 11.1% of her Instagram posts. Conversely, her Sina Weibo account prominently features commercial activities and advertisements, with 11 instances, significantly surpassing the three tags observed on Instagram. Additionally, Eileen Gu posted about "competition and training" 11 times on Weibo, marginally less than on Instagram. However, it is noteworthy that she shared only two personal life and one community service-related post on Weibo, signifying a notable disparity from her more frequent engagement in these themes on her Instagram account.

4.1.3. Interactions with followers

Upon analyzing the chosen sample timeframe, an examination of Eileen Gu's social media accounts reveals that her Sina Weibo account has garnered a greater number of likes compared to her Instagram account. The maximum number of likes on Weibo reached 1.05 million, whereas Instagram's highest count was only 325 thousand. Furthermore, the average number of likes on her Weibo account is nearly twice that of her Instagram account. Conversely, when scrutinizing the average number of comments, both accounts exhibit a near parity, with Weibo amassing 9 thousand comments and Instagram receiving 9.5 thousand comments. It is noteworthy that one particular Instagram post attracted a significantly higher number of comments than any of her Weibo posts, accumulating 94 thousand comments.

Table 4. Social media posting and interaction (in thousands)

Social media	Max Like	Max Comments	Max Repost	Avg like	Avg Comments	Avg Repost
Instagram	325	94	-	110	9.5	-
Sina Weibo	1050	64	63	208	9	7.3

The post with the highest number of comments on Instagram was shared on February 21, 2022, following the end of the Beijing Olympics. In the post, Eileen Gu summarized her personal achievements and records during the Winter Olympics, emphasizing her breakthrough as a female athlete. On the other hand, the post with the most comments on Weibo was shared on February 8, 2022, which was a forwarded post from her Instagram account. The content of the post featured her last win in the ski jumping competition, and the accompanying video was later deleted (the deletion date and reason is unknown), which may have affected the growth of subsequent comments and likes. It is also worth noting that the lack of a repost function on Instagram may contribute to a higher rate of comments and likes, as users can only interact through likes and comments.

4.2. Analysis of personal image

According to Barthes' theory, language plays a crucial role in shaping thought and experience by providing the signs and codes that give form and meaning to our social reality (Bignell, 1988). In the context of communication, semiotics places greater emphasis on the generation of meaning rather than the process of communication itself (Fiske, 1990). To further elucidate the concept of meaning, semiotics has evolved from a purely qualitative analysis to a combined qualitative and quantitative research model that goes beyond the mere description of phenomena and the analysis of texts. In this study, we collected posts from Weibo and Instagram over a specified period and identified the frequency of specific words that commonly appeared in the posts. Subsequently, we analyzed the semantic information conveyed by these words. We categorized the information content of the two platforms into five categories: sports activity, fashion, women, advertising, and others. However, it is important to note that the content of each post may encompass more than one category, necessitating the tagging of each post's content. By leveraging the data obtained, we generated a summary of Eileen Gu's image on each platform.

4.2.1. Eileen Gu's image on Sina Weibo

During the designated two-month period, Eileen Gu authored a total of 21 valid posts on Weibo. Out of these posts, 16 were published prior to the commencement of the Winter Olympic Games, four posts were issued during the competition, and one post was released following the conclusion of the event. The posts were categorized according to their content, with 11 of them related to sports. Among these sports-related

posts, the term "奥运会" (Olympics) was mentioned three times, "滑雪" (skiing) was utilized six times, and "金牌" (gold medal) appeared four times. To visually represent the proportion of each image, pie charts (Figure 1) were constructed after counting the number of posts that fell into each category.

Figure 1. Eileen Gu's image on Sina Weibo

- Ski Athlete   - Chinese Athlete   - Olympian   - Fashion Icon   - Women of the New Era
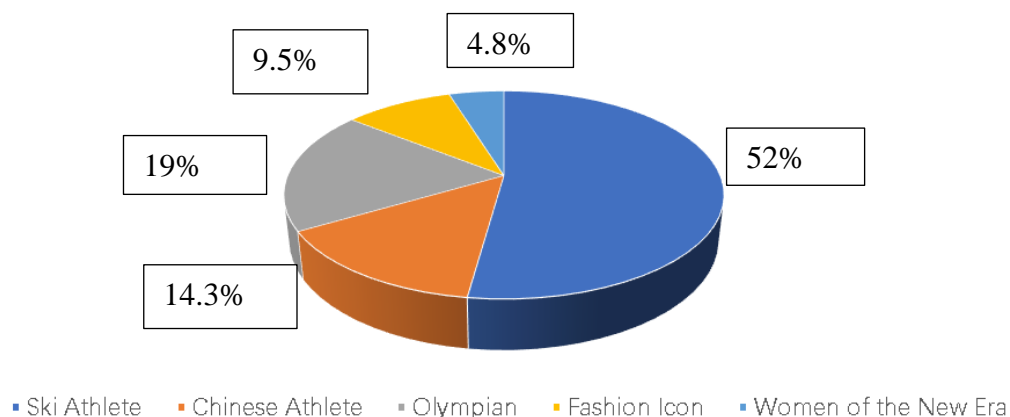
Through an analysis of Eileen Gu's consistent utilization of comparable vocabulary and language, her public image can be discerned as subjective. This deliberate linguistic choice constructs the perception of her as a prodigious figure in skiing, thereby cementing her standing as an icon in the collective consciousness of the public. Advertising is a vital aspect of social media content, and it plays an integral role in Eileen Gu's image analysis. Of the 21 posts, 11 were endorsements for various brands. The advertisements that she posted on Weibo were linked to her status as a Chinese skier. In these ads, such as those for JD (京东), Cadillac, and Mengniu (蒙牛), she employed the terms "家乡" (hometown) and "回家" (come back home) to emphasize the collective image of naturalized Chinese athletes. "北京" (Beijing), Eileen Gu's hometown, was mentioned three times in her posts. Here, "北京" (Beijing) represents not only a place name but also a reflection of home.

Additionally, Eileen Gu used terms such as "年味" (the atmosphere of Spring Festival), "虎年" (Chinese year of the tiger), and "新年" (Spring Festival) in her posts to highlight traditional Chinese festivals and to express recognition of traditional Chinese culture. This has become a way of presenting her own identity. Through her posts, Eileen Gu confirms her image as a naturalized Chinese athlete.

In advertising for Quark (夸克)[1], Kohler[2], Genki Forest (元气森林), and Luckin Coffee (瑞幸咖啡), Eileen Gu utilized terms such as "努力" (endeavor), "比赛" (compete), "超越" (overstep), "跨越" (cross

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[1]. Quark is an intelligent search APP owned by Alibaba, equipped with an AI engine.
[2]. Founded in 1873 and headquartered in Wisconsin, Kohler Co. specializes in kitchen and bath products, premium interior products, engines and power generation systems.

over), "挑战" (challenge), and "全力以赴" (make an all-out effort). These words always have a relationship between the spirit and overcoming limits, embodying the Olympic Games spirit. Eileen Gu successfully presents the image of Olympic athletes in the new era through the context of her posts.

Furthermore, out of the 21 posts, two were fashion-related and one post was about the feminist theme. Eileen Gu uses Weibo to present a fashionable and contemporary image of girls to some extent. Overall, Eileen Gu's image on Weibo can be summarized as including the image of a skiing genius, the image of a naturalized Chinese athlete, the image of Olympic athletes in the new era, the image of fashion, and the image of a contemporary girl.

4.2.2. Eileen Gu's image on Instagram

During the designated time frame, Eileen Gu disseminated a total of 18 posts on her Instagram account. Prior to the 2022 Winter Olympic Games, she published 11 posts, followed by 6 posts during the competition, and only 1 post thereafter. Of these 18 posts, 14 pertained to sports activities, 6 contained fashion-related content, 3 included information on female themes, 3 were related to advertising, and only 1 was categorized as other. Overall, Eileen Gu's images on Instagram are primarily characterized by her skiing prowess, fashion sense, modern and independent womanhood, and diverse identity. These proportions are visually represented in the following pie chart (Figure 2).

It is apparent that sports topics accounted for more than half of the total posts. The nature of sports activities often garners a substantial amount of attention and feedback, particularly during the 22 Winter Olympic Games. During this period, Eileen Gu utilized the terms "Olympics" and "skiing" 8 and 5 times, respectively, within her posts on Instagram. The emphasis on the keyword "Olympics" underscored her identity as an international athlete and highlighted her exceptional skiing ability, contributing to her portrayal as a skiing prodigy.

Figure 2. Eileen Gu's image on Instagram
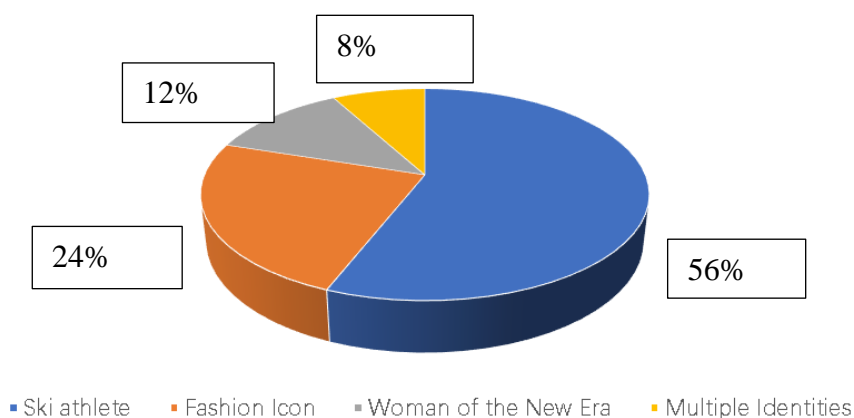
In addition to her involvement in sports activities, Eileen Gu demonstrated a predilection for sharing content pertaining to fashion through her posted publications. This type of content served as an essential component in shaping her image. On Instagram, more than 20% of the posts containing fashion-related content were shared by Eileen Gu, primarily featuring her daily outfits and the fashion brands she endorses, bolstering her fashion image.

The issue of women's rights and empowerment is a salient topic in contemporary society. By leveraging social media, Eileen Gu presents herself as an independent, modern woman, encourages women to engage in sports, and challenges stereotypical notions of female aesthetics. Consequently, the terms "girl" and "female" appeared 4 times on her Instagram account, with female-oriented topics comprising 11.5% of the posts.

As for the remaining content, it mainly pertains to identity. In 2 posts, Eileen Gu highlights the diversity of her identity, portraying herself not only as an athlete but also as a model, student, Chinese, American, teenager, and writer, among others. In this regard, Eileen Gu projects an image of a multifaceted identity.

5. Findings

5.1. Athlete's diversified social media image presentation

Consistent with the insights of Hu et al. (2023), narrating an athlete's life journey through social media stands as a strategic imperative, facilitating a more intimate connection with audiences and presenting athletes in nuanced dimensions. Eileen Gu has effectively employed a strategic approach to self-presentation on social media, utilizing her posts as a continuous means to refine her image and construct a framework of signified meanings around it. While her image across Weibo and Instagram exhibits both converging and diverging elements, portraying her as a skiing athlete, a fashion influencer, and an empowered woman, these platforms collectively underscore her multifaceted identity. The recurring emphasis on her role as a female skier is intricately tied to the contextual significance of the 2022 Winter Olympic Games. Furthermore, her persistent advocacy for female participation in sports and defiance of gender stereotypes positions her image as emblematic of an independent woman, reflecting the contemporary attitudes of women today. As underscored by Doyle et al. (2023), evaluations of athletes are entangled with issues of gender, status, and race. Eileen Gu's commitment to marginalized groups, coupled with her mixed Chinese American heritage and status as a minority athlete, underscores her sense of social responsibility. For example, on January 27th, her Instagram post declared, "Don't wait for the future to make change, our time is now. Be your own pilot." This articulation not only reflects her perspective as a public figure but also conveys a positive life attitude.

Moreover, as rightly asserted by Mogaji and Nguyen (2023), women athletes cultivate their brands through excellence, seeking partnerships, upholding personal values, conveying distinctive experiences, and transcending the confines of sport. Yet, her image also serves as a carrier of cultural connotations and ideologies, and the transfer of meaning from her image to advertising messages has been effectively

leveraged to construct impactful advertising narratives. In the advertising of JD (京东) and Cadillac in her Weibo, she used videos to show her understanding of the concept of home and her attention to traditional Chinese festivals. Those brands emphasize an ethnic sentiment through the uniqueness of its identity. There are also brands such as Genki Forest (元气森林) and Luckin coffee (瑞幸咖啡) that use her spirit of hard work to reshape brand value. Eileen Gu's image emerges as a commercially potent asset, with her Olympic champion status further enhancing her appeal to brands eager to align with her positive image.

The interactive dynamics of social media empower the public to express identification with her image, thus amplifying the overarching ideological communication encapsulated by her persona. Consequently, Eileen Gu's image transcends its material, objective existence to acquire a symbolic dimension. Functioning as a subject of communication and information dissemination, her image constitutes a multipolar field marked by diverse and intricate elements. The conveyance of her image inherently carries nuanced meanings, perceived by the public and transmuted into individual signs. Platforms such as Instagram and Weibo become arenas where the realization of figurative signified depends on the public's decoding of the codes embedded in Eileen Gu's posted information. This decoding process significantly influences the construction of her image, engaging a spectrum of decoding methods.

5.2. Transnational athlete's targeted multi-platform communication strategy

Eileen Gu, a Chinese Olympic champion, employs different positioning strategies on her two social media accounts to effectively build her personal brand and increase the value of communication. Her Weibo account primarily targets Chinese netizens in the mainland, while her Instagram account aims at followers worldwide outside the "Internet Firewall" because international netizens tend to recognize her as a world champion with both Chinese heritage and American identity. For this reason, Eileen Gu's positioning strategies on Weibo and Instagram diverge substantially. For instance, her Weibo account solely highlights her status as a ski champion through its tags, which has garnered her recognition among a significant portion of Chinese netizens. In contrast, on Instagram, she defines herself more extensively, showcasing her multifaceted identity as both an athlete and a model.

The nature of the content posted on each account also differs considerably. Eileen Gu's Weibo account primarily contains advertisements and competition updates, while she shares more personal life information on Instagram. This distinction can be attributed to her upbringing as a mixed-race athlete in the United States, where she is more accustomed to using Instagram. Her preference for Instagram over Weibo is evident from her following counts. The number of people she follows on Instagram is more than ten times that of those she follows on Weibo, indicating that Instagram is the platform she is likely to use daily, while Weibo may be more of a platform for commercial advertising and personal image display, possibly maintained by a Chinese team.

Eileen's advertising endeavors on both Instagram and Weibo demonstrate a targeted and strategic approach. On Instagram, her collaborations predominantly involve fashionable, high-end brands, such as

Louis Vuitton, IWC[3], and Beats[4]. These partnerships not only contribute to the brand narrative but also leverage Eileen Gu's Instagram as a communication channel to reach and resonate with the younger demographic, fostering an imaginative connection with these brands. For instance, on 15th January, her post featured the caption "Guess what I'm listening to @beatsbydre," accompanied by photos of the headphones, effectively portraying her youthful demeanor. Another instance, on 24th January, she explicitly mentioned that her outfit was from Louis Vuitton. Conversely, the performance of diverse advertisement types on Weibo exhibits variations due to its predominantly Chinese user base. Eileen Gu's standing as a Chinese world champion athlete affords her a broader audience in the Chinese market, prompting a heightened focus on brand awareness in her brand partnerships. As evidenced on 18th January and 26th January, Eileen Gu shared posts endorsing Mengniu, a well-established dairy brand in China."

Eileen Gu actively cultivates a personal image across various social media platforms and engages with her followers through diverse content releases. As the portrayal of sports stars in media has a direct impact on their popularity, image, and commercial value, Eileen Gu leverages Weibo as a business-oriented social platform, posting a significantly greater number of advertisements than on Instagram. This is attributable to her keen awareness of her commercial value as a sports star, particularly in China, which is reflected in the number of likes she receives on Weibo. Furthermore, major sporting events like the 2022 Beijing Olympics offer an exceptional opportunity to build individual brand identity and engage in image communication. During the Beijing Winter Olympics, Eileen Gu actively shared social media content by integrating event labels and personal images with commercial advertisements, thereby enhancing her reach and increasing her commercial benefits.

6. Conclusion

Facing new challenges as well as opportunities, sport brands, including athlete brands must strategically manage their content creation and positioning (Manoli, 2022). Eileen Gu's achievements in the winter of 2022 have researchers looking back at her strategic social media communications strategies. Upon investigating the utilization of Instagram and Weibo by Eileen Gu, it became apparent that these two new information and communications technologies have become unique and effective ways to build personal image while communicating with followers during significant events.

After a thorough examination of posts from both platforms, the authors have revisited the image of Eileen Gu and have discovered the diverse nature of her image. Despite the presence of numerous similarities in the content transmitted on both accounts, comparing them has revealed noteworthy differences. On Weibo, Eileen Gu actively presents her Chinese identity and employs her influence to diversify her commercial advertising to maximize its commercial value. Conversely, on Instagram, she creates a diverse identity, targeting a segmented audience and highlighting her identity as a minority and female

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[3]. IWC Schaffhausen is a Swiss luxury watchmaking brand since 1868.
[4]. Beats Electronics is a manufacturer of audio products founded in Culver City, California.

athlete, accepting endorsements from only a few select brands that align with her image. Throughout the chosen sample selection period, Eileen Gu's differentiated social media communication strategy has contributed to creating her personal brand and advancing her commercial interests.

In addition, it should be noted that like any research study, this study has some limitations. For example, due to the small sample size, this case study may not be the most comprehensive in summarizing Eileen Gu's social media communication strategies. Additionally, in future research, the authors suggest selecting another athlete for comparison to Eileen Gu to gain further insights.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Effects of Typographic Salience on the Processing and Acquisition of Reversed Subtitles

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Abstract

This study explores whether typographically enhanced reversed subtitles better optimize vocabulary learning compared to plain reversed captions across 30 Arabic and Spanish novices. Analyses reveal complex interactions while multimedia principles substantially improved Spanish comprehension and retention, optimization efficacy critically falters for Arabic's intricate derivational morphology. Significant limitations emerge in generalized "one-size-fits-all" augmentation assumptions, indicating personalized accommodations aligned with typological properties as instrumental pathways for unlocking excellence. Quantifying specific enhancement asymmetries spotlights imperative transitions toward frameworks actively reducing inequities through customized supports responsive to evolving needs and abilities, as enhancement techniques hold immense potential if implementation frameworks progress. Findings contribute compelling directives for equitably implementing multimedia learning at scale. However, realizing enduring collective benefit remains contingent on elevating adaptation specifications to overcome consolidation barriers tied to intrinsic structural complexities.

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1. Introduction

Attention to linguistic input is crucial for foreign language acquisition (FLA) (Carroll & Swain, 1993; Doughty, 2001; Schmidt, 1995; VanPatten, 2002). Smith (1991, 1993) posited that enhancing the input to linguistic features in the second language (L2) could facilitate drawing L2 learners' attention to those items. A type of input enhancement that has gained traction in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research is textual enhancement, which involves the use of design elements like color, boldface, and increased font size to make linguistic forms more perceptually salient without being obtrusive (Doughty & Williams, 1998; Wong, 2005). Such enhancements promote 'noticing' while ensuring the learner focuses on message's meaning, which is pivotal in SLA (Lee & VanPatten, 1995). The efficacy of strategies or approaches utilized to enhance or augment a specific aspect is known as enhancement efficacy. In the context of research, it could allude to the success of enhancements in reaching their intended goals, whether in communication, presentation, or another pertinent domain.

Subtitles are a powerful tool in foreign language acquisition, bridging the gap between the unfamiliar sounds of a new language and the learner's native tongue, providing a textual representation of auditory information (Díaz-Cintas, 2013; Liu, 2014). However, the way these subtitles are presented can significantly affect comprehension. Traditional subtitles at the bottom of the screen can sometimes serve as a crutch, leading learners to rely heavily on them without truly processing the spoken language (Paivio, 1986; Mayer, 1997; Neves, 2004). Reversed subtitles, which are subtitles in the foreign language that appear together with a soundtrack in the native language, challenge this status quo, aiming to foster deeper comprehension (Danan, 1992).

The employment of visual cues to emphasize textual or graphic features can be defined as typographic salience which describes how certain typographic elements, such as font size, style, or color, stand out or attract the eye while typological properties refer to those characteristics or qualities that identify the type or category of a linguistic or cultural entity. For instance, in linguistic studies, typological attributes may include syntactic structures, phonological patterns, or other distinguishing features that classify languages into types or groups based on shared qualities.

While previous studies demonstrate the promise of reversed subtitles (Danan, 1992; Perez et al., 2014; Ragni, 2020; Zareei, 2009), further optimization tailored to learner's aptitudes and linguistic typologies may be possible. This study seeks to answer these questions: Can adding typographic salience through bolding and color emphasis to reversed subtitles better optimize comprehension and retention of elementary foreign language videos compared to plain reversed subtitles? Additionally, does enhancement efficacy depend on the target language's typological properties? We examine two linguistically distant languages –morphologically rich, non-concatenative Arabic and more analytically simple, concatenative Spanish (Haspelmath, 2007). Their inherent morphological, syntactic, phonetic, and orthographic complexity differences may cause asymmetric outcomes.

This study has two core objectives: 1) to quantify differences in comprehension and two-day retention scores when video exposures incorporate multimedia design principles of cueing and typographic salience compared to plain reversed subtitles (Mayer, 1997); 2) to explain any asymmetric effects between languages with distinct linguistic typologies (Haspelmath, 2007; Hawkins, 1983), and evaluate the relationship between comprehension and retention outcomes across conditions.

2. Literature review

2.1. A taxonomy of subtitling approaches for foreign language acquisition

Subtitling, as a medium of translation, can be broadly classified into three categories based on the linguistic transfer involved (Díaz-Cintas, 2013). Interlingual subtitles, often termed as standard subtitling in foreign language learning literature, involve translating from one spoken language into another written language within the audiovisual (AV) content. Intralingual or bimodal subtitles, on the other hand, essentially transcribe spoken language into a written form within the same language. A third, less common form is reversed subtitles. In this mode, depending on the viewer's native (L1) and second language (L2) proficiencies, the video's spoken content in L1 is translated and displayed as written content in L2 (Liu, 2014).

The educational utility of subtitles in foreign FLA has been widely recognized. Drawing on the Dual Coding Model of Human Cognition by Paivio (1986) and Mayer's (1997) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, subtitling serves as a didactic tool that amalgamates verbal and non-verbal 'imagery' representations. Paivio posited that this fusion amplifies language processing capabilities, while Mayer underscored the importance of a learner's proactive engagement due to the interplay of verbal and visual stimuli. Furthermore, Neves (2004) lauded the non-conventional, yet gratifying approach offered by subtitled AV materials, suggesting that these tools enrich the comprehension of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions within their proper contexts. Sokoli (2006) and Talaván (2010) also accentuated the dual function of subtitling – both as a process of creation and as the end product.

From a production standpoint, the task-based methodology of integrating subtitling into FLA has shown promising outcomes. For instance, Neves (2004) found that students engaged in subtitling activities manifested enhanced language awareness and fluency in their native and target languages. Platforms like the Learning via Subtitling (LvS) tool, developed by the Hellenic Open University and outlined by Sokoli (2006), simulate professional subtitling workflows, and emphasize the contextual richness of language, especially cultural nuances.

In contrast, as a product, the exposure to subtitled content taps into Paivio's non-verbal system and Mayer's emphasis on the learner's engagement. Such exposures have been found to enhance language acquisition in children (Kuppens, 2010) and improve the interrelation of reading, listening, and speaking skills in learners (Borrás & Lafayette, 1994). This approach also augments learners' motivation (Aidinlou & Moradinejad, 2016; Black, 2022; Borrás & Lafayette, 1994; McLoughlin & Lertola, 2014).

Delving into vocabulary acquisition, subtitled content is beneficial in bolstering content comprehension and retention. Numerous studies have confirmed the efficacy of standard interlingual subtitles (Bellalem et al., 2018; Danan, 1992; Koolstra & Beentjes, 1999), intralingual captions (Faqe, 2017; Perez, Peters & Desmet, 2018; Yildiz, 2017), or a combination of both (Gorjian, 2014; Peters, Heynen & Puimège, 2016). A noteworthy study by Aidinlou and Moradinejad (2016) found that vocabulary acquired from subtitled content surpassed those of the traditional teaching methods in long-term retention. While the current study focuses specifically on vocabulary acquisition, research has also shown that video materials can provide meaningful foreign language input through exposure to formulaic sequences and multiword lexical bundles (Khatami, Ameri & Navidinia, 2023).

One specific investigation by Perez et al. (2018) into bimodal subtitles distinguished between full utterance captions, keyword-only captions, and keyword captions with their L1 equivalence. While the first two conditions yielded similar outcomes in form recognition and meaning recall, the third condition —emphasizing linguistic transfer in subtitles— produced the most significant results. These findings underscore the importance of selective word emphasis, an attribute that this research aims to explore further within the context of reversed subtitles. Although the present experiment utilizes brief one-minute videos for consistency, findings may also inform efforts to optimize learning from full-length films. As Ebtehaji, Moghadas and Mehdizadkhani (2023) discuss, film translation involves complex decisions regarding the localization of sociocultural references and discourse patterns that shape perceptions.

Reversed subtitles, while less conventional, offer unique opportunities in FLA. Talaván and Rodríguez-Arancón (2014) documented improvements in English L2 writing abilities among native Spanish, Catalan, or Basque speakers through the multifaceted processes embedded in reversed subtitling. Concurrently, Danan (1992) emphasized that reversed subtitles, by furnishing context in L1, enable learners to focus more intently on L2. These subtitles clarify word boundaries that might be ambiguous when merely heard. Comparative analyses between standard and reversed subtitles have yielded mixed results, indicating the absence of a universally superior subtitling mode (Baltova, 1999; Danan, 1992; Gorjian, 2014; Peters et al., 2016; Zareei, 2009).

In conclusion, the myriad of subtitling methods available, each with its inherent strengths and limitations, compels further investigation. Kanellopoulou, Kermanidis and Giannakoulopoulos (2019, p. 8) astutely noted that, "more investigation is necessary so that we can determine what types of subtitling are more suitable for each of the learner's needs and skills development, as it seems that different types of subtitling can enhance different areas of learning". The complex interplay of linguistic, cognitive, and typological factors influencing the efficacy of subtitles in foreign language acquisition requires a holistic approach to understand comprehensively. It is evident that while some methods may favor vocabulary acquisition, others might stimulate broader linguistic comprehension or cultural assimilation.

2.2. The role of language typology in subtitle processing

Linguistic typology critically underpins the mechanics of language acquisition, delineating patterns and processes inherent to diverse languages. It offers insights into language functionalities and structures, orienting learners towards effective acquisition routes (Kuhl et al., 1992). Distinctly, phonological typology emerges as one typological variant with considerable variability across languages. In contrast to non-tonal languages, Mandarin, for instance, is distinguished from non-tonal languages by a complex phonological system that incorporates tonal distinctions. This introduces potential complexities for learners from non-tonal linguistic backgrounds, necessitating a refinement in their auditory perceptual skills to recognize and produce nuanced tonal variations for accurate meaning conveyance.

Diving deeper into linguistic structures, morphological typology emerges as a significant factor (Haspelmath, 2007b). It encapsulates the classification of languages vis-à-vis affixation and word formation procedures. Languages are broadly categorized into agglutinative, fusional, and isolating groups. To elucidate, agglutinative languages like Turkish, Japanese, and Finnish are discerned by the concatenation of morphemes signifying singular grammatical facets, contrasting sharply with isolating languages, typified by individual morphemic words, and inflecting languages that fuse multiple grammatical categories within word components (Britannica, 2020). The embedded morphological richness mandates learners to adopt a meticulous, systematic learning approach, profoundly influencing the acquisition trajectory.

Syntactic typology, highlighted by Hawkins (1983), offers an analytical framework based on word order constructs such as subject, object, and verb. Depicted through graphic structures termed 'trees', these exhibit terminal and nonterminal nodes associated with vocabulary and syntactic categories. Linguistic terminology often mirrors kinship relations, detailing the hierarchy and interrelation of these nodes (*Node Relations,* n.d.). As Kayne (1984) posited, binary-branching nodes predominate in Universal Grammar due to universally shared formal constraints in human language. Conclusively, the inherent typological variations necessitate learners to recalibrate their comprehension and construction of sentence structures when transitioning between languages with differing syntactic typologies.

Lexical nuances also interplay with language acquisition, especially when emotions and intricate concepts interweave with lexemes (Kövecses, 2003). This necessitates learners to grapple with the subtleties of semantic distinctions, shaping their understanding of intricate ideas. The domain of semantic typology has historically been a focal point of crosslinguistic studies, notably during the ethnosemantics era (Moore et al., 2015). Such studies substantially advance linguistic and cognitive science paradigms, offering insights into linguistic semantics and its interplay with other linguistic domains.

Lastly, in contrast to Latin-based languages such as Spanish, the typographical elements of Semitic languages including Arabic language introduce unique challenges. (Ambrose & Harris, 2006). Arabic language characterized by its right-to-left script orientation and non-Latin alphabets, require learners to adapt to novel writing systems. Furthermore, it indicates morphological and phonetic elements contrast

starkly with the more phonetically similar Romance languages, which share considerable lexical overlap with English (Ladefoged & Maddieson, 1996). These linguistic and script idiosyncrasies, especially in Arabic as a Semitic languages, pose formidable challenges in the realm of subtitling (Schröter, 2005), accentuating the intricate interplay between language typology and subtitle processing.

2.3. The effects of textual enhancement in subtitles

The concept of Textual Enhancement (TE) stems from the broader Input Enhancement Hypothesis, primarily introduced by Smith (1993). Smith described TE as techniques designed to heighten the visual distinction of texts, especially targeting specific linguistic structures. Such enhancement is succinctly captured by Ayiewbey (2013), who stated that the visual modification of printed text parts embodies a targeted syntactic structure intended for instructional purposes. The goal is to guide learners' attention toward these targeted structures while they remain engrossed in the discourse's meaning. Various methods like italicization, underlining, color-coding, boldface characters, and other visual enhancements are applied to realize this objective. Smith (1993) argued that the foundational principle behind these techniques is to amplify the perceptual salience of a target form, consequently facilitating its processing.

This pedagogical approach has been shown to steer L2 learners toward specific linguistic nuances (Alshaikhi, 2018; Boers et al., 2017; Han, Park & Combs, 2008). Gass and Selinker (2008) described the information L2 learners encounter during their educational journey as input. Smith (1993) further delineated this, characterizing input as potentially processable language data available to learners, incidentally or deliberately. He underscored the potential ambiguity in discerning what learners actively process and absorb merely from observation. After input is the stage termed "intake." This stage crystallizes the moment when a learner assimilates and translates the processed input into knowledge (Smith, 1993).

Several researchers, such as Ghaemi & Golshan (2017), Jones & Waller (2017), Kim (2006), and Sarkhosh et al. (2013), have since vouched for the theoretical premises of TE. Jones and Waller (2017) highlighted an imbalance in TE research, pointing out that while grammatical structures are frequently explored, lexical items remain relatively underexamined. Further, they posited that integrating TE with deliberate teaching is comparably underrepresented. Despite this, they acknowledged the versatility of TE, suggesting its application in incidental learning, targeted strategies like those using Coxhead's Academic Word List (2000), or even in self-directed learning paradigms.

One pivotal element underscored by Kim (2010) is the salience of input. He proposed that heightened salience could catalyze learners' discernment of target inputs and subsequent recognition of inaccuracies. This notion is closely intertwined with the principle of TE, which aims to enhance the perceptual prominence of linguistic features, thus fostering attention and recognition. Kim (2010) expanded on this, suggesting that these highlighted features bolster perceptual salience in a learner's memory, steering them towards recognition and subsequent internalization.

Further investigations into the applicability and efficiency of TE have been conducted. Kim (2010) illuminated the potential of input enhancement in real-world classroom ESL reading instruction, emphasizing its capacity to bolster linguistic feature learning with minimal disruption to comprehension when employed judiciously. Meanwhile, Torkabad and Fazilatfar (2014) evaluated the impact of TE and Input Processing treatment on tenses. They inferred that acquiring and fossilizing tenses require more than routine teaching sessions, advocating for enhanced instructional strategies. Simard (2009) explored TE's typographical aspects, emphasizing that each typographical cue's inherent salience potential could lead to differential attentional impacts.

Fast-forwarding to more contemporary studies, Rezvani and Khanzade (2022) scrutinized the potential effects of TE on vocabulary recognition among Iranian EFL learners. They utilized boldface and Emoji stickers as their tools for textual enhancement. Transitioning to the domain of subtitles, Danan (2004) championed the pedagogical potency of audiovisual material augmented with subtitles, suggesting its prowess in amplifying listening comprehension. However, not all scholars share this optimism. While some, like Vanderplank (1988), see subtitles as a reservoir of language information that can potentially expedite learning, others, like Zareei (2009), argue that subtitles detract from listening skills.

Several studies have delved into the potential of movie subtitles in language learning. For instance, Roohani and Rabiei (2011) indicated that any form of subtitling —bimodal, standard, or absent— enhanced vocabulary scores. Similarly, studies by Rokni and Ataee (2014), Ayand and Shafiee (2016), and Pishdadi Motlagh and Seyed Beheshti Nasab (2015) collectively illuminated the varied effects that subtitles and their distinct modes exert on language learning and assimilation.

However, one niche area that warrants further exploration is "reversed subtitling." In this subtitling mode, the original audiovisual content is in the viewer's native language (L1), while the subtitles are rendered in the viewer's foreign language (L2). Pioneers like Talaván et al. (2017) have already embarked on this journey, examining how collaborative reverse subtitling influences writing capabilities in English as a second language. Ragni (2020) expanded this horizon, probing into the implications of reversed subtitle translation on L2 input reading and retention. Notwithstanding the paramount importance of reversed subtitles, especially in the context of L2 vocabulary retention, this remains relatively uncharted territory. A pressing question remains unanswered: typographic salience's potential role in this specialized subtitling mode.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

A cohort of 30 university students, predominantly aged between 8 and 24, participated in the study. These participants were enrolled in first-semester introductory courses: 12 studied Arabic and 18 Spanish. Recruitment was performed through course announcements and flyers to ensure a diverse representation of gender, age, and linguistic backgrounds. Before commencement, each subject completed a

questionnaire that captured demographic details, previous language learning experiences, and any known cognitive or visual impairments. All subjects signed informed consent forms, ensuring they were aware of the nature of the research and their right to withdraw without penalty.

3.2. Materials

The study focused on two typologically distinct languages: Arabic, a Semitic language, and Spanish, a Romance language. The emphasis was on evaluating the effects of typographic salience on the comprehension and acquisition of these languages. These languages were chosen to determine if the impact of typographic emphasis differs across distinct linguistic families, thereby assessing the method's generalizability.

3.3. Videos

Four one-minute-long videos were used, curated to ensure they were engaging and appropriate for beginner language learners. All videos centered around the theme of Egyptian Pharaohs, a theme selected for its richness in nouns and its cultural relevance. Focusing on nouns was deemed appropriate as nouns are often easier to represent visually, making them ideal for a study involving video materials.

The content, theme, and structure of the videos were meticulously chosen to maintain uniformity. This ensures that any observed outcome differences can be confidently attributed to the experimental manipulation, not extraneous variables.

3.4. Subtitles

Two different subtitle conditions were created for each video:

> *1. Plain Reversed Subtitles:* These were regular reversed subtitles without any typographic emphasis. This condition served as a control to compare the effects of typographic salience.

> *2. Typographically Salient Reversed Subtitles:* Specific nouns in the subtitles were emphasized using color. This was done to test the hypothesis regarding the impact of typographic emphasis on comprehension and retention. Bold and italics were deliberately avoided. Bold might imply a different kind of emphasis (like loudness in speech), and italics do not render as prominently in Arabic.

The subtitle conditions were developed carefully by the researchers using video editing software to ensure they met proper linguistic and technical standards for presentation to the reviewers. Professional guidelines were employed in the creation of the subtitles regarding accuracy, synchronization, and the "3 second rule" which states that a subtitle should remain on screen long enough to allow viewers an average reading speed, generally requiring a minimum duration of 3 seconds. Through multiple iterations of

review and revision, the researchers ensured the subtitles achieved quality and precision appropriate for inclusion in the study.

3.5. Assessment tasks

1. Comprehension: Following each video, students did a 5-question multiple-choice quiz. Each question had four options, one correct answer, and three carefully designed distractors. These distractors were formulated to gauge common misconceptions or partial understandings.

2. Retention: The retention quiz mirrored the comprehension quiz in format but was designed to probe long-term memory retention and the depth of understanding.

Both quizzes were revised iteratively based on feedback from the pilot testing, ensuring clarity, fairness, and appropriateness for the study objectives.

3.6. Testing procedure

Pre-test: The pre-test aimed to control prior knowledge. Participants were given a list of 10 words, half of which would appear in the videos. By asking participants to identify familiar words, the study controlled the potential effect of prior vocabulary knowledge on post-test scores.

The main experiment was divided into two sessions:

1. Plain Subtitle Session: Participants watched a video with plain reversed subtitles and took a follow-up comprehension test and a retention test two days later.

2. Typographically Salient Subtitle Session: The procedure was the same, but with enhanced textual subtitles.

This within-subject design was chosen to minimize individual differences in language learning aptitude, cognitive abilities, and other factors. By exposing each student to both conditions, the study could more confidently attribute outcome differences to the experimental manipulation (typographic salience).

It is important to note that the decision not to inform participants about the follow-up retention test was influenced by literature suggesting that test anticipation does not necessarily lead to better learning (Perez et al., 2018). Furthermore, in line with recommendations from Danan (1992), videos were played twice to emphasize the benefits of repeated exposure for comprehension.

3.7. Scoring procedure

Comprehension and retention scores were recorded for all quizzes across conditions. A two-way mixed ANCOVA was used to test the differences between the independent variables of language (Arabic vs

Spanish) and subtitle type (plain vs enhanced). Participants' baseline proficiency based on course level was entered as a covariate to control pre-existing skill differences. Follow-up paired samples t-tests isolated the impact of each subtitle type (plain vs enhanced) within each language. A series of Pearson's *r* correlation analyses were also conducted between comprehension and retention outcomes to quantify enhancement effects on aligning understanding and memory encoding. All analyses employed an alpha level of .05. Partial eta squared values were calculated to estimate effect sizes, supplemented by Cohen's conventions. Power analyses ensured sufficient statistical power (> 0.80) to detect medium effects based on prior research.

This combination of ANCOVA, paired t-tests, and correlational analyses enabled the evaluation of the main effects of language typology and enhancements on scores, clarifying interactions between variables, and characterizing consolidation patterns —all crucial for testing study hypotheses regarding asymmetric optimization efficacy and transferring comprehension to retention.

4. Results

4.1. Comprehension scores

The comprehension score comparison results (Table 1) reveal tangible improvements when Spanish exposures incorporated basic multimedia design properties through enhanced reversed subtitles. Specifically, the Spanish enhanced group demonstrated sizeable scoring increases exceeding 2 additional correct responses on average on the 5-question assessments compared to plain reversed subtitle counterparts. This performance optimization for the Spanish enhanced group translates to over 2 more correct responses on the concept evaluations.

Table 1. Comprehension score comparison across test types

Test Type	Perfect (10/10)	High (8/10)	Moderate (6/10)	Poor (Below 6)	Average Score
Arabic Enhanced	8%	25%	25%	42%	5.8/10
Arabic Plain	8%	33%	33%	25%	6.3/10
Spanish Plain	22%	33%	17%	28%	6.2/10
Spanish Enhanced	56%	33%	11%	0%	8.9/10

Reviewing the score distribution percentages, over half (56%) of the Spanish enhanced participants achieved perfect 10/10 concept evaluation accuracy. This represents a considerable performance optimization beyond the 22% subset from the Spanish plain condition that reached flawless comprehension. Quantitatively substantiating the impacts of embellishing vocabulary forms through emphasis techniques, Spanish enhancement integration effectively strengthened mental mappings between new multimedia input and existing meaning representations to heighten issues resolution.

In contrast, for Arabic learner cohorts, enhanced comprehension improvement effects are negligible and statistically non-significant according to inferential testing. However, moderate effect size values indicate potentially substantive gains from enhancement exposure for some Arabic individuals. With only 8% on average of Arabic participants across both plain and enhanced conditions demonstrated flawless 10/10 issue comprehension, between 25-42% managed partial understanding captured through moderate 6/10 scores in both categories.

So for Arabic, enhanced reversed subtitles failed to provoke unambiguous collective improvements on acute concept evaluation metrics. However, enhancement interfaces likely still carried certain acquisition advantages compared to standard reversed subtitles for novice learner profiles. Especially given considerable individual variability and differences in initial proficiency baselines, gains for Arabic subgroups remain plausible. But interactions with the multi-faceted morphological and syntactic complexities intrinsic to Arabic as a language modulated overall asymmetric results patterns between Spanish and Arabic on optimization efficacy measures (Haspelmath, 2007; Hawkins, 1983).

4.2. Retention performance

Exploring two-day deferred retention patterns (Table 2), initial Spanish learning trends demonstrated substantive optimization when exposures incorporated typographically enhanced reversed subtitles rather than plain reversed versions. Quantitatively, this manifested through nearly 2 additional correct responses on average on the delayed retention assessments from incorporating visual vocabulary form emphasis techniques.

Table 2. Retention performance across test types

Test Type	Perfect Retention	Above Average	Average	Poor Retention
Arabic Enhanced	42%	17%	17%	25%
Arabic Plain	0%	42%	25%	33%
Spanish Plain	56%	22%	17%	6%
Spanish Enhanced	56%	6%	22%	17%

Descriptively elaborating durable knowledge accrual comparisons, the Spanish enhanced participant group matched the 56% perfect retention performance benchmark set by the Spanish plain category exposure. However, the enhanced condition simultaneously managed to moderately reduce the subset share that demonstrated deterioration from initial comprehension levels. For example, while still moderately high at 17%, the Spanish enhanced group had over one and a half times fewer participants that struggled profoundly relative to the 6% rate among the plain reversed subtitle group.

Incorporating visual emphasis through color highlighting of key vocabulary items may have strengthened memory encoding pathways to yield this good preservation combination of upheld flawless retention

alongside partially remediated asymmetry in backward skill transfer after external supports are removed. The embedded visual cues likely assisted in forging accurate initial encodings to sustain benefits.

However, for Arabic groups across enhanced versus plain exposures, observable differences on retention metrics remain less perceptible and statistically non-significant. Between subgroup sample size limitations likely constrained sensitivity for detecting more subtle learning differentiations over time. Nonetheless, descriptive results still demonstrate moderately discernible two-day retention performance improvements from enriched enhanced input.

Specifically, 42% of enhanced Arabic learners successfully demonstrated perfect durable knowledge preservation versus a concerning 0% rate among plain reversed subtitle participants. But severe asymmetry persistence remains problematic, as one-third of Arabic novices failed to consolidate even partial comprehension despite enhancement efforts. Diagnostically revealing obstacles, outcomes signal imperative refinements targeting linguistic, morphological, syntactic accommodations to strengthen internalization pathways for broader excellence.

4.3. Connecting comprehension to downstream retention

Further analyses connecting initial video comprehension accuracy to downstream retention were conducted within each exposure type using correlation statistics. This enabled direct quantification of enhancement optimization effects on aligning acute understanding to durable knowledge crystallization across the languages.

Table 3. Comparison of comprehension and retention metrics across test types

Analysis Area	Metric	Definition	Arabic Plain	Arabic Enhanced	Spanish Plain	Spanish Enhanced
Comprehension Scores	Perfect	Scored 10/10	8% (n=1)	8% (n=1)	22% (n=4)	56% (n=10)
	High	Scored 8/10	33% (n=4)	25% (n=3)	33% (n=6)	33% (n=6)
	Moderate	Scored 6/10	33% (n=4)	25% (n=3)	17% (n=3)	11% (n=2)
	Low or Below	4/10 or below	25% (n=3)	42% (n=5)	28% (n=5)	0% (n=0)
Retention Alignment	Aligned High	10/10 Comprehension and retention	0% (n=0)	42% (n=5)	56% (n=10)	56% (n=10)
	Moderately Aligned	Matched 8/10 or 6/10 scores	42% (n=5)	17% (n=2)	22% (n=4)	6% (n=1)
	High Comp Lower Retention	Higher comprehension score	25% (n=3)	17% (n=2)	17% (n=3)	22% (n=4)
	Low in One Area	One score area low	33% (n=4)	25% (n=3)	6% (n=1)	17% (n=3)

For Arabic groups, enhanced reversed subtitles demonstrated over a six-fold strengthening of positive couplings between comprehension and retention performances relative to plain reversed subtitle conditions. Visually spotlighting key vocabulary forms through color highlighting likely supported perceptual processes to minimize extraneous processing demands during subsequent effortful memory consolidation operations.

By redirecting freed working memory resources, participants could more effectively consolidate enhanced mental representations with prior knowledge. However, for more transparent Spanish lexical mappings, incorporating unnecessary enhanced embellishments without intrinsic structural complexities to necessitate multimedia scaffolding disrupted positive comprehension-to-retention alignment links observable solely from plain reversed subtitle exposures.

Inherent Spanish characteristics like vowel-consonant orthographic transparency and predominant suffixing morphology intrinsically enable fundamental vocabulary acquisition for some novice learners without risks of overloading finite cognitive resources through further visual augmentation. So uncontrolled integration of additional informational elements during encoding stages from unnecessary enhancements could overwhelm working memory capacities with detrimental impacts on durable retention preservation.

5. Discussion

Aligning with cognitive load principles, Spanish multimedia embellishments likely minimized extraneous processing to direct attention toward strengthened mental concept integration, as Cierniak et al. (2009) demonstrated through reduced split-attention effects. However, Arabic optimization efficacy faltering despite aggregation gains mirrors overwhelmed linguistic subgroups from unsupported enhancement burdens. This aligns with evidence that interventions can overwhelm learning interplays without tailoring to specific needs and (de Bruin et al., 2007).

While the current study was narrowly focused on vocabulary acquisition metrics, the subtitles themselves may also influence additional perceptual factors beyond lexical items. As Imani and Jalali (2023) discuss, stylistic choices in subtitles can implicitly convey ideological meanings that shape viewer interpretations. Therefore, enhancement techniques altering visual salience could also indirectly manipulate connotative meanings. While not a focus here, this presents intriguing possibilities for future work to explore how typographic manipulations might influence conceptual perceptions through shifted stylistic nuances. Typological attributes like Arabic's non-concatenative morphology probably contribute to asymmetric obstacles given documented multi-faceted structural encoding barriers noted across modalities (Hendriks & Koster, 2010).

Additionally, while Spanish suffixing consistency may sufficiently scaffold transitional retention absent unnecessary further multimedia demands at novice levels, elaborate multi-tiered Arabic morphological patterns could better consolidate certain knowledge components, partially corroborating Paivio's (1986)

emphasis on driving deeper mental linguistic representations. Furthermore, superior Spanish comprehension despite lower Arabic retention questioned assumed universal multimedia augmentation optimization, supporting appeals for personalized frameworks embracing language complexity interactions as essential to equitable excellence (Leow, Yahaya & Samsudin, 2014).

Dual-coding theoretical frameworks help contextualize strategic Spanish multimedia gains through principles of aligned cueing and intrinsic consistency, efficiently allocating resources to consolidate enhanced information flows based on transparent mappings, mirroring Mayer and Moreno (1998). But insufficient morphological-syntactic scaffolding left many Arabic participants struggling profoundly, quantitatively reflecting recognized difficulties arising when enhancements interface with multi-faceted structures across modalities without customization. Fundamentally divergent enhancement efficacy asymmetry patterns further signal imperative transitions toward designs actively reducing inequities through evidence-aligned personalized support specifications tailored to responding to evolving needs across diverse languages (Slavuj et al., 2017).

Looking beyond current experimental design limitations, recent personalized and adaptive platforms tracking changing needs show immense promise for perpetuating temporary comprehension improvements before unsupported skill decay, aligning with both multi-timescale designs (Cui & Sachan, 2023) and explicit tracking of evolving abilities (Wyatt & Redmon, 2022). Furthermore, specialized enhancements embracing quantitative linguistic typologies through generative learner data models could enable precise optimization refinements by systematically manipulating key parameters (Ismail, Harous & Belkhouche, 2016; Zilio & Fairon, 2017).

Equitable optimization progress mandates embracing multifaceted frameworks proactively reducing barriers through evidence-aligned personalization specifications tailored to carefully responding to elucidated individual difference and structural interactions (Kalyuga, 2011; Varlokosta et al., 2015). Transitioning to excellence demands research-driven designs actively mitigating inequities through customized supports responsive to needs.

Connecting back to the motivations highlighted at the outset, perpetuating temporary comprehension gains demands transitioning toward personalized and adaptive platforms that track evolving learner abilities over expanded timescales (Cui & Sachan, 2023; Wyatt & Redmon, 2022). Furthermore, optimizing and sustaining outcomes equitably across diverse groups necessitates frameworks that embrace interactions of individual differences, motivational engagement, and structural linguistic variables in qualification (Leow et al., 2014; Sabeima et al., 2022).

Progressing towards excellence ultimately requires multifaceted evidence-aligned enhancement architectures that proactively reduce barriers by responding to elucidated needs with customized supports (Ismail et al., 2016; Zilio & Fairon, 2017). The overarching objective must remain furthering equitable comprehension through research-informed designs that mitigate inequities by tailoring to individual and language-specific interactions.

6. Conclusion

This study revealed complex interactions between multimedia enhancements and individual or linguistic factors. For Spanish, incorporating design principles of typographic salience and cueing effectively optimized comprehension and retention, likely by strengthening mental connections and reducing extraneous processing. However, for the morphologically complex Arabic language, optimization was less effective, signaling risks in assuming universal effectiveness from uniform approaches. Customizations aligned with Arabic's non-concatenative morphological patterns may better permeate consolidation barriers.

Divergent enhancement patterns question assumed universality and standardized optimization efficacy across typologies. While Spanish scaffolding sufficiently enables transitional lexicon learning for novices, elaborate Arabic properties likely stimulate deeper cognitive encodings for certain profiles, reflected in superior Spanish comprehension despite lower Arabic retention. Quantitatively corroborating these efficacy differences is imperative for tailoring equitable support specifications that respond to linguistic needs and capture complexity factors.

This demonstrates asymmetries in optimization efficacy and interactions between enhancements and typological elements that modulate learning. Progressing excellence demands barrier-reducing personalization architectures that attenuate inequities by aligning customized supports to needs across languages and individuals. However, limitations warrant caution in generalizing conclusions. Expanded inquiries with broader randomization, outcome duration measures, and linguistic diversity will inform transition paths to equitable encoding solutions.

Furthermore, perpetuating temporary gains requires transitioning to adaptive architectures tracking evolving abilities to mitigate decay risks when static enhancements fail to respond to growing proficiency. Incorporating motivational, affective, and linguistic customization metrics into recursive learner profiles offers potential for sustainably elevating outcomes by preventing lapses. Synthesizing personalized platforms promises optimization refinements for uniformly catalyzing excellence amidst proliferating multimedia language exposures across diverse global needs.

Disclosure statement

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Cultural Signs in Multilingual Drama Feature Films: Rendition Strategies

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Abstract

The contemporary international landscape is more accurately portrayed in the works of filmmakers who increasingly choose to incorporate multiple languages. However, this diversity introduces additional challenges during the translation process. This research describes the translation strategies employed in dubbing multilingual films and explore the differences in translating third language (L3) in Iranian national and private channels based on the models of Zabalbeascoa and Voellmer (2014) and Sanz Ortega (2011). Three films were selected which were dubbed and broadcast by two national TV studios: the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting Company (IRIB) and an online Video on Demand (VOD) service, Filimo. The analysis revealed that the most prevalent verbal technique was neutralization (Ai), which reduced linguistic variety. Non-verbal signs were adapted to adhere to the sociocultural norms of Iranian culture. Filimo, in its dubbing efforts, maintains films closer to their original duration compared to IRIB. Filimo's commitment to preserving more scenes from the original film without compromising the plot exceeds that of IRIB, providing audiences with a more enriched viewing experience.

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1. Introduction

According to Diaz-Cintas (2011), filmmakers are increasingly creating films that reflect real-life society. These films depict contemporary social conditions, such as immigration, tourism, war, multilingualism, and multiculturalism, making multilingual films (MLFs) a more accurate portrayal of real-life society (Berger & Komori, 2010; Wahl, 2005). MLFs, as outlined by Khoshsaligheh et al. (2022), possess characteristics such as multilingualism, multiculturalism, multi-identity, multi-country, multi-ethnic, and multi-nationality. Filmmakers employ multilingualism to immerse audiences in "the foreign" and create a sense of authenticity (Szarkowska et al., 2013, p. 1).

While Iranian audiences express a demand for foreign films, the presence of languages other than the source language poses challenges for translators (Badstübner-Kizik, 2017). Translators encountering MLFs during the dubbing process may employ various strategies. The use of different languages in films remains an understudied area, with limited research, particularly in the Iranian context. Consequently, this study seeks to explore the strategies employed by translators in rendering multilingualism in the Persian dubbing of English films. Given the scarcity of research on translating MLFs for Iranian national channels and the absence of studies on translating MLFs for Iran private media, the findings can contribute valuable insights into how translators handle L3 translation in various media contexts in Iran.

The study compares the original films and their Persian-dubbed versions, examining those broadcasted on the IRIB and Filimo that allows users to stream videos online. Due to Iran's historical inclination for creating dubbed versions, this research primarily focuses on dubbed films, aiming to identify the dubbing strategies utilized by Iranian national and private channels in MLFs and investigate the divergences in methods between these two channels.

2. Literature review and theoretical framework

The concept of multilingualism pertains to the capacity to communicate and understand multiple languages, involving the expression of linguistic content in various linguistic systems (Delabastita & Grutman, 2005). Grutman (2019b, p. 182) defines multilingualism as "the co-presence of two or more languages in a society, text, or individual". As mentioned by Adams (2003), there are three primary types of multilingualism: a multilingual individual, a multilingual culture, and a multilingual text, whether written or spoken. According to O'Sullivan (2007), multilingualism, whether observed in film, opera, theatre, or literature, creates a *mise en abyme*, a narrative or symbolic structure that reflects or repeats itself within the work. This serves to inspire what Seyhan (2002) referred to as the multilingual imagination of the audience. The use of multiple languages in various forms of artistic expression enhances the complexity and depth of the audience's engagement, fostering a rich and nuanced experience.

Aloseviĉienė (2020) and Delabastita (2019) defined multilingual texts as those that incorporate sociolects, slang, pidgin, created languages, and official languages. Due to their utilization of various semiotic

modalities to convey meaning, audiovisual texts are considered multimodal (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1994; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996). As highlighted by Mayoral et al. (1988), the intended meaning is produced through the interactive collaboration of channels for speech, sound, and vision. This interaction often involves subtitling, dubbing, or a combination of both techniques into a target language. As noted by Beseghi (2023) and Dwyer (2005), the subject of multilingualism has garnered increased attention from filmmakers and researchers in AVT in the last decade. There has been a notable rise in the number of articles exploring and discussing multilingualism in the context of AVT in recent years (Eriss & Khoshsaligheh, 2023; Khoshsaligheh et al., 2022; Mehdizadkhani & Chen, 2023; Monti, 2022; Ranzato & Zabalbeascoa, 2022). This trend reflects a growing recognition of the significance of multilingual elements in audiovisual content and the need for nuanced translation approaches to address these complexities. MLFs are characterized by the integration and juxtaposition of multiple languages within a single feature film. Multilingualism is strategically employed in narratives where it makes sense for speakers of different languages to interact or when the plot unfolds in diverse language contexts or nations. Plots in MLFs often incorporate various elements such as: history of migration: both voluntary and involuntary migration play a role; inclusion of tourism, vacations, and business trips abroad: settings involving travel and international business interactions; historical and contemporary conflicts: this includes themes related to war, colonialism, and terrorism, as highlighted by Badstübner-Kizik (2017) and De Bonis (2015).

Plot-based justified multilingualism in films may also arise in situations involving: parallel events occurring at different locations: the narrative may involve simultaneous events in various locations with a direct or indirect connection, films set in border regions and multilingual areas- these films explore the linguistic diversity and cultural dynamics of regions with multiple languages in use; economic, political, and cultural globalization aspects: the need for authentic multilingualism in film can be driven by globalization factors, including international institutions, as highlighted by Badstübner-Kizik (2017). These elements contribute to the authenticity of the multilingual experience in films and reflect the complexities of real-world linguistic and cultural interactions.

The prevalence of films featuring multiple languages has increased since the 1980s and 1990s, particularly in Hollywood (Meylaerts & Serban, 2014). Many film studies scholars attribute this rise in multilingualism in films and literary works to globalization (Bleichenbacher, 2008; Díaz-Cintas, 2011; Dwyer, 2005; Heiss, 2004; O'Sullivan, 2011). As noted by Cenoz (2013), multilingualism has gained prominence due to several factors, including the influence of new technologies, globalization, and transnational migration. These elements have far-reaching effects on political, social, and educational aspects, contributing to the increased visibility of multilingualism in various forms of media, including films.

Bandia (2008, p. 165) highlighted reasons beyond globalization that have drawn scholars' attention to multilingualism, including "migration and the ensuing cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism of today's global societies". Thus, multilingualism, as a social phenomenon, has the potential to influence the perspectives of individuals and societies (Cenoz, 2013). The interconnectedness of migration,

cosmopolitanism, and multiculturalism contributes to the richness of linguistic diversity, making multilingualism a significant aspect of contemporary global societies.

The influence of multilingualism on films is manifest in the rising occurrence of audiovisual compositions that incorporate a minimum of two languages concurrently, underscoring the evolving dynamics of language representation in cinematic narratives. (Corrius et al., 2019). Delabastita and Grutman (2005) define a multilingual text as a textual composition expressed in multiple languages. Rainier (1998) suggests that at least a single foreign word is necessary to identify a text as multilingual, where more than one language is used. Beyond texts, multilingualism extends to individuals and society as a whole (Grutman, 2019a).

MLFs are created in a manner that involves the use of more than one language (Heiss, 2004). As Díaz-Cintas (2011) notes, films with multiple languages spoken by characters, even if it's just one character, are considered MLFs. MLFs possess various characteristics, including multilingualism, multiculturalism, multi-identity, multi-country, multi-ethnic, and multi-nationality (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2022). Wahl (2005) terms this genre as polyglot films. Apart from MLFs, other terms like hetero-lingual films (Grutman, 2006) and plurilingual films (Bleichenbacher, 2008) are also utilized to describe films with similar multilingual features.

As Alosevičienė (2020) has pointed out, it is expedient to classify MLF as a formal genre, a categorization substantiated by extensive analyses conducted on both the genre itself and its various subgenres. According to Wahl (2005), the 'polyglot film' genre is so named due to the repetitive nature of the narratives and characters. Wahl (2005) further explains that the term "polyglot" denotes the presence of multiple languages, while, in contrast, the term "multilingual" refers to the presence of three languages. Grutman (2019b), on the other hand, dismisses any distinction between "multilingual" and "polyglot".

Translating and dubbing MLFs represent a particularly "new challenge", as described by Heiss (2004, p. 218). Dubbing often conflicts with dialogues originating in multiple languages or even dialects (Ranzato, 2020). Language flattening and homogenization seem to be more prominent in dubbing (Cronin, 2008; O'Sullivan, 2011). Barnes (2012, p. 247) defined code-switching as "the alternation between two languages, dialects or language varieties". During the plot development and to ensure audience reach, the transition from one language to another is crucial in these types of films. Dubbing cannot employ code-switching due to a technical constraint. However, it is a common discourse strategy for representing multilingual communities: Harmonizing the original actors and dubbing the actor's voices (Savoldelli & Spiteri Miggiani, 2023).

2.1. Verbal level

According to Corrius (2008) and Corrius and Zabalbeascoa (2011), the L3 accounts for language variation in translation and represents linguistic expressions that are not neatly classified as either L1 or L2. The

new translation equation is L1 + L3 ➡ L2ST + L3TT. To summarize, the new equation follows the following conceptual framework:

1. Only one primary language (L1) is used to utter the ST. A multilingual text may have multiple L1s (L1a, L1b, and ...), where they are considered equally important. Any other secondary language (L3ST) turns the equation into L1 + L3. There is a difference between L1b and L3 in terms of how much each language occurs in a text;

2. The translation from L1 to TT is L2;

3. Compared to L1, L3 has fewer words than L1. It is also not uncommon for a text to contain more than one L3 (for example, L3a, L3b, L3c, etc.);

4. It is also possible for L3ST to be a dialect of L1 (like L3TT concerning L2).

Zabalbeascoa and Voellmer (2014) have proposed a model that encompasses various solutions, functions, and consequences to address the challenge of L3 in audiovisual translation. These solutions, as categorized by Zabalbeascoa and Voellmer (2014), are detailed in Table 1, a framework employed by Khoshsaligheh et al. (2022, p. 5).

Table 1. Possible solutions to render the L3ST into the target language

Scenario	Solutions and explanation

A: (L3TT = L2)
Neutralisation: the secondary language (L3) vanishes.
	Ai: (L3ST = L3TT = L2)
	  L3=invisible,
	  Replacing it with L2 words
	  Removing the L3ST segments
	Aii: Indicating that a character is speaking a different language by conspicuous pronunciation, accents, or vocabulary
	Aiii: It indicates that a character has a specific ethnicity or nationality by conspicuous pronunciation or vocabulary.

B: (L3TT = L1) *Adaptation*: providing a different language from L2 to maintain L3 visibility.	**B:** It is an unlikely solution where native English-speaking characters in an ST were given some words in English in a dubbed version.
C: (L3TT = L3ST) *Transfer unchanged*:	**Ci:** Transcribing word for word (or different words in the same L3). **Cii:** Conveyed accent (stronger or weaker, but recognisable)
D: (L3ST≠L1, L2, L3ST) *Adaptation*	**D:** L3TT could theoretically be any other language.

Zabalbeascoa and Voellmer (2014) highlight various factors, such as the connection between L1 and L3, which can impact the selection of solutions for dubbing. The importance of L3's function within the narrative, as emphasized by Raffi (2019), must be considered. Viewer expectations play a crucial role, and decisions about translating L3 and the chosen strategy can be influenced by the linguistic background and proficiency of the target audience (Díaz-Cintas, 2011; Vermeulen, 2012). Rendering L3ST in dubbing

can indeed have unintended consequences for L2 and its audience in comparison to the original content. The introduction of multilingualism in dubbing versions necessitates careful consideration of how the translator's decisions will impact the final product and its reception by the audience (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2022).

2.2. Non-verbal level

To facilitate interpretations and occasionally augment credibility and coherence, components encompassing auditory, visual, nonverbal, and paralinguistic elements are incorporated (Zabalbeascoa & Voellmer, 2014). As Chaume (2004) mentioned, visual images and audio paralinguistic information are non-verbal. Eco (1977) and Poyatos (1997) argue that verbal communications are accompanied by kinesics, proxemic, and paralinguistic factors that reinforce meaning and utterances. Thus, Perego (2009) emphasizes the importance of considering these factors in dubbing and subtitling vocal statements due to their practical and emotional roles. Nord (1991) states that non-verbal features are culture-specific and may require adaptation when translated into a target language. This helps translators choose the most effective translation technique and verbal solutions. Sanz Ortega (2011) categorizes the different types of non-verbal signs, as shown in Table 2, which is used by Khoshsaligheh et al. (2022, p. 5).

Table 2. Non-verbal signs

1	Paralanguage	Acoustic Channel	Non-verbal features of voices like intonation, rhythm, or tone of voice that related to emotions, such as screams
2	Kinesics	Visual	Body movements and gestures such as a smile or a wink that bear meaning and accompany words
3	Proxemics	Visual	Physical space and privacy (Interpersonal space), depending on the context and the socio-textual practice of every community
4	Cultural signs	Visual	Meaning of colours, places, physical appearance

Religion, politics, sexual content, and profanities are among the topics that have been altered in the dubbed versions of films in Iran. According to the investigation by Kenevisi et al. (2016), translators of Persian-dubbed versions of English-language films have employed manipulation techniques to modify linguistic features and references that are prohibited for the Iranian population. Various elements, including religious and political considerations, impact how films are dubbed into Persian. Bogucki and Díaz-Cintas (2020) also emphasize that viewers' limited language proficiency, reluctance to explore diverse languages and societies, and broader social, cultural, and belief systems can collectively lead to the censorship of the original soundtrack by authoritarian governments (Perego & Pacinotti, 2020).

3. Method

The study adopts a qualitative research design to address the research questions, aiming to identify common translation strategies employed in the Persian dubbing of MLFs across different channels in Iran. Employing criteria sampling, three films spanning the years 2000 to 2018 that were dubbed on both channels were found. Three MLFs were found as the primary focus of the study, and the audiovisual and

textual materials from these films were utilized as the primary data sources. The study also seeks to assess the variations in translation and dubbing strategies between MLFs aired on private and national channels. These films were dubbed and broadcast by both national TV studios: IRIB and Filimo. The film selection criteria were designed to include films that utilize at least two to six languages, with English serving as the primary language. Although the films were originally in English, Persian was chosen as the language for translation, and other languages played a secondary role. The selection also emphasized films with a multifaceted nature, encompassing multiple languages, cultures, countries, religions, identities, and societies. Table 3 provides a list of the selected films along with additional relevant details. The main reason for the variation in run times between the original and dub versions is censorship.

Table 3. Description of the study's information corpus

Films	Country	* Runtime	Year	Directors	Languages
Arrival	United States Canada	• 2:07 • 1:45 (22) • 1:54 (13)	2016	D. Villeneuve	English, Russian, and Mandarin
Blade Runner 2049	United States United Kingdom Canada Hungary Spain Mexico	• 2:31 • 1:13+4 (1:18) • 2:19 (12)	2017	D. Villeneuve	English, Finnish, Japanese, Hungarian, Spanish, Russian, and Somali
The meg	China United States	• 1:53 • 1:28 (25) • 1:50 (3)	2018	J. Turteltaub	English, Japanese, Mandarin, and Thai

*Run times are written in sequence according to the runtime of the original film, the dubbed version of the film by the national channel, and then by Filimo.

In this study, the authors compare the original film's audiovisual text with its dubbed versions in both national and private channels (Filimo). We employ a model developed by Zabalbeascoa and Voellmer (2014) to assess how the linguistic diversity of MLFs is manifested in the official Persian dubbing by translators. As this model involves examining how they handle multilingualism, i.e., the interaction of L1, L2, and L3, all in reference to ST and TT, within this model. Each language in each film will be analyzed independently to identify any discernible patterns.

The objectives of this study are threefold: firstly, to examine the representation of multilingualism in films officially dubbed and broadcasted on national and private channels in Iran. Secondly, to illustrate how multilingualism is portrayed in dubbed films published in Iran's national and private media, especially Filimo. Thirdly, to investigate whether there is a difference between the L3 translation strategies of national and private media. All three MLFs were meticulously matched sentence by sentence to the

dubbed versions in both channels. The acquired information was organized using the classification scheme for translation solutions developed by Zabalbeascoa and Voellmer (2014) and the classification for the non-verbal level by Sanz Ortega (2011). The ensuing tables present all solutions applied across all MLFs.

4.1. *Blade Runner 2049* **(Villeneuve, 2017)**

In this film, L1 is English, and different L3s are used in other scenes, both verbally and non-verbally:

4.1.1 Non-verbally

Non-verbal signs, encompassing elements like women's groans, body gestures of prostitutes, physical characteristics of replicas, and proxemics, undergo censorship in both channels, aligning with Iran sociocultural and religious norms. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that these nonverbal forms of communication, which collaborate with spoken dialogue, play a crucial role in augmenting storytelling and contributing to the creation of a rich and immersive cinematic experience in *Blade Runner 2049*.

The duration variance between the dubbed film on IRIB and the original film amounts to 1 hour and 18 minutes. Notably, approximately 58 minutes from the film's commencement are omitted, a modification likely attributable to both editing for brevity and content censoring. The original film includes scenes featuring explicit content, including nudity and sexual depictions, in violation of the regulations set by the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (MCIG). It is essential to emphasize that any film showcased on Iran national and official channels must adhere to the stipulations outlined by the Iranian MCIG to secure broadcasting permission. While there seems to be some flexibility in the standards of Iranian dubbing studios regarding acceptable ideological content, it is crucial to note that they may not strictly adhere to the guidelines set by MCIG.

In contrast to the national channel, Filimo not only retained the initial 58 minutes of the film but also undertook the translation and vocal dubbing of written content in the film's opening scene concerning *Blade Runner 2049*. The temporal discrepancy between the dubbed version of Filimo and the original film is a mere 12 minutes, signifying a more concerted effort to maintain the integrity of the film with fewer omissions. However, Filimo has opted for complete removal or censorship of entire scenes, particularly those featuring sexual content, except for a scene at the 2:17-minute mark.

In *Blade Runner 2049*, multiple languages are employed non-verbally to enrich the film's visual world-building. These languages contribute to the portrayal of a globalized society, illustrating a future where diverse cultures and languages have converged. Table 4 provides examples of various languages, including Russian, Japanese, Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Arabic, Bulgarian, Hebrew, Hindi, and Bengali, utilized in nonverbal contexts.

Table 4. Non-verbal signs in *Blade Runner 2049*

		Non-verbal Signs
Languages	English	- Holographic advertising - Signage and labels - Visual interface - Textual documents
	Russian	Signs advertising "girls" in downtown scenes are in Russian.
	Finnish	Not used non-verbally
	Japanese	Signs and advertising
	Hungarian	Not used non-verbally
	Spanish	On billboards and signage
	Somali	Not used non-verbally
	German	Not used non-verbally
	Korean	- Signage and advertisement at the casino - The presence of Korean characters
	Chinese	- Holographic advertising - Signage - various written texts throughout the futuristic cityscape
	Arabic	The buttons Luv applies to Wallace are written in Arabic.
	Bulgarian	The term "Целина" on the greenhouses is in Bulgarian and means "celery." Although it is utilized in the film as a fictional language, the script is the same as the one used in Bulgarian.
	Hebrew	Advertising Coca-Cola is in Hebrew
	Hindi	The police station signs are in Hindi
	Bengali	During a Sony advertisement

In addition to the visual representation of various languages in *Blade Runner 2049*, there are other non-verbal forms of communication, such as the film's sound design. This encompasses background music, ambient sounds, and electronic tones, all contributing to nonverbal communication. Furthermore, the film incorporates advanced technology and futuristic interfaces, with characters interacting through touchscreens and other nonverbal means. These interactions serve as a form of nonverbal communication between characters and their environment, providing insight into the evolution of technology in the film's universe.

4.1.2 Verbally

Table 5 illustrates the predominant verbal languages in *Blade Runner 2049*. It is evident that English is the primary language throughout the film, encompassing crucial conversations and plot developments. In both dubbed versions, English dialogue is translated into Persian. Regarding other dominant languages in the film, they are either translated into Persian or omitted, with Ai being the predominant transfer type employed. It is important to note that the film contains a significant amount of futuristic jargon and slang that is not based on actual languages. Even though various languages are utilized in the film, English remains the most common language for dialogues and interaction between most characters.

Table 5. Dominant L3s in *Blade Runner 2049* (Villeneuve, 2017) and their Persian dubbed versions

Language	Type	TT Persian in IRIB	TT Persian in Filimo	Transfer type in IRIB	Transfer Type in Filimo
English	Verbal	Standard Persian	Standard Persian	L1 ➡ L2	L1 ➡ L2
Somali	Verbal	Standard Persian	Standard Persian	Ai	Ai
Spanish	Verbal and non-verbal	Delete	Delete	Ai	Ai
Finnish	Verbal	Delete	Standard Persian	Ai	Ai
Russian	Nonverbal	Delete	Delete	Ai	Ai
Hungarian	Verbal	Delete	Standard Persian	Ai	Ai
Japanese	Verbal and nonverbal	Delete	Delete	Ai	Ai

4.2. *The Meg* (Turteltaub, 2018)

In this film, L1 is English, and three languages are used as L3: Mandarin, Thai, and Japanese. Like the film reviewed in the previous part, when the L3 is spoken in a scene, English subtitles are used in this film. Using part subtitles in English for different languages and keeping those subtitles in Persian dubbing can be a clue for the viewer that different languages are used in the film. These English subtitles are preserved in both national and private channels.

4.2.1 Non-verbally

Throughout the film, the cityscape is adorned with vibrant neon signs, many of which display Chinese characters or incorporate Chinese symbols. These signs contribute to the multicultural atmosphere of the setting and provide visual cues that add to the immersive experience.

In IRIB, the runtime of the film is shorter than in Filimo because IRIB censored and deleted more non-verbal scenes that are against the laws of the Iranian MCIG, like the kinesics and proxemics of Jonas, when the male character is naked from the waist up in 40 min, but it is not censored in Filimo. Also, cultural signs such as, the Chinese wedding scene and people at Sanya Bay are deleted and censored in IRIB's dubbed version but not deleted in Filimo's dubbed version most often. Table 6 provides examples of various languages utilized in nonverbal contexts of *The Meg*.

Table 6. Non-verbal signs in *The Meg*

		Non-verbal Signs
Languages	English	- Visual interface - Textual documents
	Mandarin	The cityscape is adorned with vibrant neon signs in Chinese.
	Thai	Not used non-verbally
	Japanese	Toshi wrote a letter in Japanese to his wife just in case he died.

4.2.2 Verbally

According to Table 7, English serves as the primary language in *The Meg*, with translation into Persian in both dubbed versions. The translation strategy for L3s shows no significant difference between the two channels, and the prevailing strategy is Neutralization (L3TT=L2), resulting in the nonvisibility of L3. In this strategy, L3 is substituted by its equivalent words in the second language, namely Standard Persian, or entirely omitted. IRIB translators aim to preserve the original Mandarin to maintain the plot and evoke a similar mood for the target audience.

The Thai song "Hey Mickey" plays when the scene switches to Thailand. This song is deleted and substituted with a song without lyrics in the IRIB version of the film due to its female singer and beats. However, in the Filimo version, the song's original voice is preserved, so the transfer type in IRIB is Ai, and in Filimo, it is Ci because of transferring the song in L3 (Thai) unchanged. The Thai boat crewman character says some words in Thai that are not understandable to the film's viewers, is not subtitled in English, and is not translated and dubbed in either version.

Table 7. Dominant L3s in *The Meg* (Turteltaub, 2018) and its Persian dubbed versions

Language	Type	TT Persian in IRIB	TT Persian in Filimo	Transfer type in IRIB	Transfer Type in Filimo
English	Verbal	Standard Persian	Standard Persian	L1 ➡ L2	L1 ➡ L2
Mandarin Chinese	Verbal and nonverbal	Standard Persian Delete Chinese	Standard Persian Delete Accent of Chinese	Ai Ai Ci	Ai Ai Ci
Japanese	Verbal and nonverbal	Standard Persian	Standard Persian	Ai	Ai
Thai	verbal	Delete	Delete Thai	Ai	Ai Ci

Upon examining the treatment of L3s in this film and their translations on both national and private channels, it becomes apparent that the national channel's dubbed version underwent more censorship and had more omissions compared to the Filimo version. The national channel's version included the removal of the female singer's voice, the Chinese wedding scene, all beach scenes, the scene featuring a male character naked from the waist up, and the censorship of women's clothing. In Filimo's version, there are

fewer omissions and less censorship; for example, Filimo did not censor or remove the male body. The primary reason for the shorter runtime of this film in IRIB compared to Filimo is the greater number of scene omissions in the IRIB dubbed version.

4.3. *Arrival* (Villeneuve, 2016)

Contrasting the two previously reviewed films with this one, fewer L3s are used, including Chinese Mandarin and Russian. These languages depict global communication efforts in the face of alien arrival. The film also includes significant portions featuring fictional alien languages. The alien language depicted in the film is called Heptapod. It was created by linguist Jessica Coon and is based on the concept of non-linear orthography. The Heptapod language is characterized by circular symbols representing whole ideas or concepts rather than individual sounds or letters.

4.3.1 Non-verbally

At the non-verbal level, the film did not include any instances of prohibited paralanguage or kinetic signals. The censorship of proxemics in the IRIB dubbed version, but not in Filimo, can be attributed to cultural issues.

4.3.2 Verbally

The Heptapod language was specifically created for the film and is entirely unknown. According to Corrius and Zabalbeascoa (2011), Heptapod is a constructed language (conlang), indicating that it has never been used before and lacks native speakers. Conlangs serve a rhetorical purpose in bringing fictional cultures to life. The Heptapod language remains unchanged in both the IRIB and Filimo dubbed versions, with the transfer type, according to the model of Zabalbeascoa and Voellmer (2014), being Ci. Heiss (2004) suggests that the primary reason for choosing this unknown language is to create an alienating impact. The language lacks subtitles or additional modes to preserve the original version's secrecy, suspense, and mystery. As it is not widely recognized, the examiners deliberately excluded it from the languages under analysis. Only in the final moments are English subtitles included to help viewers comprehend the unfolding events. At 1:08 min, the soldiers' dialogues in Russian, which were unintelligible, were omitted by IRIB. However, in Filimo, the Russian dialogues were fully translated into Persian. Therefore, the transfer type of L3, as per the model of Zabalbeascoa and Voellmer (2014), in IRIB is Ai, involving the omission of the Russian segments, while in Filimo, it is also Ai, but with the translation of Russian into Persian. In the 1:23 min scene, Agent Halpern's character played a Russian voice on the laptop. Since the voice was incomprehensible, both in IRIB and Filimo, this Russian voice was removed, indicating the removal of L3 segments in both dubbed versions, with Russian being treated as Ai. In the IRIB dubbed version, the segments in Mandarin Chinese are preserved, indicating a transfer type of Ci. However, in the Filimo dubbed version, the Mandarin Chinese segments are omitted, suggesting a transfer type of Ai. As shown in Table 8, the dominant transfer type of English as the film's primary language and other L3s used in Arrival is Ai in both dubbed versions.

Table 8. Dominant L3s in *Arrival* (Villeneuve, 2016) and its Persian dubbed versions

Language	Type	TT Persian in IRIB	TT Persian in Filimo	Transfer type in IRIB	Transfer Type in Filimo
English	Verbal	Standard Persian	Standard Persian	L1 ➡ L2	L1 ➡ L2
Russian	Verbal	Delete	Standard Persian Delete	Ai	Ai Ai
Mandarin Chinese	Verbal and nonverbal	Chinese	Delete	Ci	Ai
Heptapod Language	nonverbal	Heptapod	Heptapod	Ci	Ci

Table 9 showcases the languages and their solutions employed during the analysis of the three films. While Chinese, Russian, and Japanese are the most frequently encountered languages, it's noteworthy that there isn't a single solution that uniformly applies to all languages.

Table 9. Languages and solutions in *Blade Runner 2049, The Meg, and Arrival*

N	Languages	Solutions in IRIB	Solutions in Filimo
1	Somali	Ai	Ai
2	Spanish	Ai	Ai
3	Finnish	Ai	Ai
4	Russian	Ai*2	Ai*3
5	Hungarian	Ai	Ai
6	Japanese	Ai*2	Ai*2
7	Mandarin Chinese	Ai*2/Ci*2	Ai*3/Ci
8	Thai	Ai	Ai/Ci
9	Heptapod Language	Ci	Ci

5. Discussions and conclusion

As highlighted by Zabalbeascoa and Voellmer (2014), translating multilingualism poses unique challenges for translators, particularly in the context of dubbing, where each language serves a distinct purpose in the plot. The complexity of this task is further compounded in Iran, given the prevalent religious and cultural conditions, which impose additional constraints and restrictions. This research focused on the dubbing practices of IRIB and Filimo in handling three MLFs. This study reveals that Ai

(L3ST = L3TT = L2) is the predominant solution for translating MLFs in both IRIB and Filimo at the verbal level in Iran. To contextualize these findings, a comparison was made with two similar studies conducted in Iran on the Persian (L2) and English (L1) language pair by Khoshsaligheh et al. (2022) and Ebrahimzadeh Poustchi and Amirian (2021). Their studies indicated that the most common strategy employed by IRIB in dubbing MLFs is the replacement of L3ST with L2 (Ai). In employing Ai (L3ST = L3TT = L2) as a solution, L3 segments are either deleted or substituted with L2 words. This neutralization process obscures the functional and stylistic features of the original dialogues, as outlined by Zabalbeascoa & Voellmer (2014). In summary, the analysis reveals a significant lack of audience exposure to L3s, as most instances involve substituting the L3s with Persian as the second language (L2) in the study corpus. Tables 10 and 11 show the frequency of all solutions in both IRIB and Filimo channels.

Table 10. Frequency of solutions in IRIB

Solutions	Ai	Aii	Aiii	B	Ci	Cii	D
Numbers	11	0	0	0	3	0	0

Table 11. Frequency of solutions in Filimo

Solutions	Ai	Aii	Aiii	B	Ci	Cii	D
Numbers	13	0	0	0	3	0	0

The predominant use of monolingual dubbing by both channels suggests a tendency for ideological manipulation aligned with sociocultural and religious aims, as posited by Kenevisi et al. (2016). The adoption of Ai as a translation solution in both channels may also be influenced by MCIG rules prohibiting scenes involving sexuality, acts of aggression, vulgar speech, and extramarital relationships (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2022). The findings of this study align with research conducted outside of Iran by Ulrych (2000), Heiss (2004), Pavesi (2005), Chiaro (2008), De Bonis (2014), and Dore (2019). Similar to Persian dubbing, the most commonly employed strategies in Italian dubbing, classified under Group A according to the model of Zabalbeascoa and Voellmer (2014), aim to render L3s invisible and eliminate linguistic variations.

Following the Ai strategy, the second most common approach used by both IRIB and Filimo is Ci. This strategy aims to maintain the language barrier by transferring the L3 in its original form to TT. Meylaerts (2006) emphasizes that to preserve multilingualism, the L3 is expected to remain consistent after translation. With the Ci method, the original style and mode are retained in the dubbed versions, although only a few L3 words are transported unchanged to the target film compared to the Ai strategy. Andino (2014) notes that not translating the film's dialogue helps preserve the multilingual flavor, especially in films where the subject is based on a specific L3. The findings from the research by Nemati Lafmejani (2022) indicate that the most common translation method in some analyzed dubbed films on IRIB was

Ci, which involves preserving the L3 in the dubbed version. The reason for adopting this strategy is that in the majority of the films reviewed in her study, the L3s serve as the primary elements of the narratives. However, in the films analyzed in this study, the L3s were not the main elements of the narratives.

None of the films analyzed in this study employed Aii, Aiii, B, or D solutions as translation strategies in both channels. It is noteworthy that despite the substantial use of various English dialects in the source texts for character characterization, these dialectal differences are not expressed in the Persian dubbing versions in both channels. In the opinion of translators, this linguistic gap is addressed through adjustments in lexicon, grammar, tone, and intonation (Zabalbeascoa & Voellmer, 2014). The inevitability of losing some meaning during dubbing is evident, given the inherent differences between the source and target languages. One illustrative example lies in the challenge of transferring the accent of the original language spoken by film characters. Since there may not be an equivalent accent in the target language, the strategy employed by dubbing managers involves removing the original accent and relying on dubbers to deliver the lines in Persian. However, there are still strategies to convey the presence of an accent. For instance, characters with distinct verbal contexts prompt the translator to use different vocabularies. To avoid a homogeneous context, the translator employs street talk in Persian. This approach aims to maintain the diversity of linguistic expression in the dubbed version. In conclusion, both Iranian national and private media endeavor to eliminate multilingualism and neutralize the presence of different languages in the original films by predominantly employing Ai as their translation strategy. In essence, it appears that Iranian translators and dubbing companies might not prioritize capturing the characteristics of alienation and multilingualism. The prevalent use of the Ai strategy suggests a focus on minimizing alienation among the target audience and maintaining consistency (De Bonis, 2014; Heiss, 2014).

Sociocultural and religious norms in Iran have exerted a notable influence on the portrayal of non-verbal signs in the three films under consideration, prompting adjustments in their depiction. Filimo demonstrated more dedicated efforts in preserving original non-verbal scenes, achieving greater success compared to IRIB in providing the audience with insights into the characters during moments of non-verbal communication. Compared to the IRIB-dubbed versions, the runtime of the analyzed films in Filimo is more aligned with the original versions. The primary difference between the original and dubbed runtimes lies in scene omission. This strategy involves removing offensive moments that are incompatible with TL culture. In essence, censorship in these films ranges from the exclusion of banned terms at the word level to the omission of specific scenes (Hashemian et al., 2014). The official authorization for the broadcast of films in Iran is subject to restrictions in 14 specific situations, as outlined by Khoshsaligheh and Ameri (2016), and Khoshsaligheh et al. (2017). Pakar and Khoshsaligheh (2021) have categorized scenes featuring visual (non-verbal) elements that undergo modifications such as removal, reframing, or painting over, attributed to religious and socio-cultural considerations. Scenes falling within the socio-cultural category are deemed inappropriate within the Iranian context, aligning with cultural and social norms (Pakar & Khoshsaligheh, 2021). Adherence to regulations is imperative for state-run entities, driven by considerations of political, cultural, or religious nature (Kenevisi et al., 2016; Khoshsaligheh & Ameri, 2014, 2016).

The findings of this research illuminate the strategies and methods employed in translating MLFs by two dubbing studios in Iran, namely IRIB and Filimo. The identification of differences in their translation strategies provides valuable insights. The comprehensive discussion within the essay has practical implications for translators, dubbing directors, studios, and translation students.

Future studies could explore the reception of MLFs within Iranian culture, examining the translators' motivations for frequently choosing Ai as a translation strategy and identifying the factors influencing their decisions. Further research might investigate the translation strategies employed by other private channels, such as Aparat and Namava, to assess potential differences in dubbing MLFs across various platforms. Additionally, within the realm of professional dubbing in Iran, analyzing the strategies of home entertainment distribution studios in dubbing MLFs could provide valuable insights. Now that the dubbing strategies of MLFs in IRIB and Filimo have been revealed, it is recommended that researchers conduct additional mixed-methods research among Iranian audiences, employing interviews and questionnaires to gain deeper insights into their attitudes. Additionally, interviewing translators and responsible institutions would help uncover the intentions behind the frequent use of Ai as a translation strategy.

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Building Capacity of Interpreting Services in Australian Healthcare Settings: The Use of Video Remote Interpreting During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Confronted with a crisis of unprecedented scale in the second quarter of 2020, Australian States and Territories had to adopt crisis management strategies to ensure equitable access to services are guaranteed for all communities. In this context, and because face-to-face interpreting was no longer an option for each consultation, clinics, hospitals, and GP practices were urged to resort to remote interpreting, i.e., the use of technologies to gain access to an interpreter. After setting the Australian healthcare interpreting scene against historical milestones, this article discusses the usability of Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) in Australian healthcare settings, the way the demands for this new modality were met, as well as the perceptions of participants involved in remote communication. Findings from a mixed method study are presented and discussed. The data collected through surveys and interviews aimed to identify how and if the use of VRI proved efficient, and if this modality was expected to replace onsite and telephone interpreting and to what extent. The outcomes showed a shift from Telephone Interpreting to Video Remote Interpreting as the preferred remote modality, though onsite interpreting remains the preferred modality of the participants involved in the communication exchange.

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1. Introduction

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, new demands in Translation and Interpreting (hereafter T&I) services forced interpreting service providers in Australia to adapt quickly to the new communication requirements while respecting the national lockdown measures, thereby directly impacting interpreters in their professional practice. The restrictions to international travel put in place by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) as early as March 2020, greatly impacted every sector of the economy, and services in particular. These decisions were then followed by lockdown measures implemented differently in States and Territories, with a longer and stricter lockdown period from August 2020 onwards in Victoria as the State was driving the tally of new cases. One year later, in July 2021, both the Greater Sydney region and the State of Victoria were forced into lockdown again to respond to high transmission of the Delta variant, impacting the everyday lives of 12 million people, i.e., approximately half of Australia's population.

As part of the *Guidance for Health Service Organisations* published by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (NSQHS), a Risk Management Plan was adopted to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Screening protocols were put in place to protect the workforce, visitors, and patients, including social distancing measures, the obligation to wear masks indoors and sometimes outdoors, using QR codes for checking into public and private spaces, amongst the major measures. These safety protocols varied according to the State or Territory concerned and the latest developments in terms of COVID-19 transmission. Adding to the complexity of preparedness measures is the very nature of medical interactions, which demand the respect of personal privacy when communicating, ensuring each individual's rights to access to reliable and timely information is protected. These rights to safe and qualitative health-related information are guaranteed under the *Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights* (2008*)*. Because of such a critical and complex situation, public health policies both at federal and state levels were redefined and adapted to the new landscape.

The Australian 2021 census reports that approx. 300 separately identified languages are spoken in Australia and that more than one fifth (22.3%) of the Australian population speak a Language Other than English (LOTE) at home, peaking at 27.6% in Victoria (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Consequently, a significant proportion of the users of T&I services in healthcare comes from the various Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities. With the added difficulty of working under changing and constraining conditions, how would the healthcare system cater for the needs of these CALD communities?

In the language industry, the pressing need to offer safe and efficient communication solutions triggered a rapid response from Language Service Providers (LSPs) and language departments within public health facilities and community centers. As the highest demand interpreting services in Australia lies in the healthcare sector (Hlavac et al., 2018a), both the public and private sectors were urged to find alternatives to continue providing services generally delivered face-to-face (also called in-person or onsite interpreting) in healthcare settings while maintaining an equivalent level of quality. This also involved

mandatory compliance with updated working conditions, hence enabling clinics, hospitals, and GP practices to run as smoothly and safely as possible in such unforeseen circumstances.

The crisis sparked by COVID-19 triggered a domino effect on the whole healthcare system, stretching it to a point where stringent restrictions had to be put in place to alleviate the burden on hospitals and clinics and help mitigate any influx of people in intensive care. Interpreters could no longer be called to come and support in person. The obligation to comply with both safety protocols and individual rights translated into the surge in the demand for Remote Interpreting (RI), into the swift adaptation and ramping up of telemedicine services (also called e-health services), and the use of platforms such as *Telehealth* and *Healthdirect* to deliver interpreting services. Onsite interpreting, the preferred modality in the pre-pandemic era, was to be replaced by either Telephone Interpreting (TI) or Video Remote Interpreting (VRI). New markets emerged for language services to be delivered remotely and interpreters also had to adapt quickly to maintain their activity while learning to work differently.

Some of the data collected in the study presented in the sections below showed that the demand for remote services (including VRI) skyrocketed in some areas. For example, figures obtained from Northern Health, a public health facility in northern Melbourne, show that 63% of interpreting requests in the second half of 2020 were made via TI with a gradual switch to VRI once their inhouse interpreters had achieved specific VRI training. At the Royal Melbourne Hospital, VRI appointments increased from 10-15 a month to 100-200 a month, while a large Melbourne-based LSP recorded a record increase of such appointments in that period compared to pre-COVID data. Studies conducted in other countries drew the same conclusions (De Boe et al., 2024; Lazaro Gutiérrez & Nevado, 2022). However, little is known about how such shifts in practice may have affected interpreters' working conditions, the organization of interpreting services within healthcare services, or the LSPs' response to such demands. Over the years, calls for research to be carried out have been made to better understand the efficiency (Jacobs et al., 2018; Kuo, 1999) and practicality of VRI in healthcare practice (Locatis et al., 2010; Pöchhacker, 2016), or the adequate training of interpreters specializing in that area (Hlavac, 2013), and its cost-effectiveness compared to onsite and telephone interpreting (Masland et al., 2010; Kerremans et al., 2018). In an attempt to bridge this gap, this article will present and discuss a study carried out in 2020-2021 to examine how LSPs and in-house language services adapted to meet changing interpreting needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The project looked specifically at the way changes were implemented at various levels during medical interpreted consultations, and how the use of VRI impacted the delivery of healthcare services, considering potential obstacles to its extended use.

2. Multiculturalism and the emergence of community interpreting in Australia

Australia is a country of immigration, "one of the nations of the New World that […] attracted millions of migrants to new lands where they would be able to become the builders of new societies" (Ozolins, 1998, p. 8). Awareness of the implied linguistic diversity and possible obstacles to fluid communication pervading many areas of society arose in the early 1970s with the concept of multiculturalism (Koleth, 2010). It occurred at a time when the social-democrat government endeavored to understand the needs of

its ethno-culturally diverse communities and to develop a "policy of multiculturalism based on the desire for social cohesion and for integration of diverse groups of people in the Australian populace" (Hlavac et al., 2018b, p. 2). Among the political realisations catering for the needs of the different ethnic and linguistic groups and ensuring equal access to services for all, it is worth noting the establishment of the first telephone interpreter service in the world in 1973, of various federal grants for T&I services in hospitals from 1974, of the first full-time courses in T&I from 1975, and the creation of NAATI, the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters in 1977 (Hale, 2007; Hlavac et al., 2018b; Ozolins, 1998). Such developments allowed for a more structured practice of 'community interpreting', a term first coined in the early 1970s (Chesher, 1997). In 1978, the Galbally Report on the Review of Post-Arrival Programs and Services to Migrants shed more light on several existing services: English language teaching programs, establishment of multicultural resource centers, support for the recognition of overseas qualifications via the Committee on Overseas Professional Qualifications, and T&I services, to name a few. It also recommended a focus on two specific areas of language services which are still the main components of community interpreting and T&I training in Australia today: health and law. Particular attention was put on T&I funding requirements, the need for the expansion of T&I services, and the possible applications of such services across public services (Hlavac et al., 2018b). Once endorsed, the Galbally Report also paved the way for the implementation of a National Policy on Languages, highlighting the importance of training for translators and interpreters. A few years later, the Lo Bianco report (1987) was pivotal in highlighting the importance of professionalizing the T&I industry. The Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) was born that same year, followed in 1992 by the Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association (ASLIA), as recommended by the provisions made under the Australian Disability Discrimination Act (1992) for deaf people to access services through Auslan (Australian Sign Language) interpreters (Napier & Kidd, 2013). The establishment of codes of ethics, guidelines, and professional standards in the T&I industry largely contributed to creating the framework needed for practitioners to perform their duties as interpreting professionals while offering the best service possible to users, especially in the healthcare sector.

3. Healthcare interpreting in times of crisis

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines the term *crisis* under the broader term of *emergencies* as covering "both preparedness and response ("crisis management")."[1] In Australia, disaster and emergency management fall under the aegis of States and Territories, and different response plans and guidelines were set up at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in accordance with national policy guidelines: *Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus (March 2020); Australian Commission on Safety And Quality in Healthcare -NSQHS Standards, Guidance for health services*

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[1]. *World Health Organisation (WHO), Glossary of Humanitarian Terms.*
https://www.who.int/hac/about/definitions/en/

organisations; Australian Health Sector Emergency Plan – Management Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Populations; *Pandemic Plan for the Victorian Health Sector (March 2020),* to name a few.

The COVID-19 pandemic has proved a crisis of unprecedented scale in modern human history and one which challenged the structure and very definition of the provision of language services across the country, particularly in healthcare. Examining the use of language in emergency situations through a comparative analysis, O'Brien (2018, p. 1) stresses the importance of clarity and accuracy, and "the need for language translation to be a key element of disaster management," hereby echoing the emphasis put on quality interpretation to ensure basic human rights are not denied as in the context of migrant crises (Schuster et al., 2018). The urgency to respond to the unexpected COVID crisis served as a wake-up call to remind different T&I stakeholders of the importance of ramping up language services to achieve the main objective: protecting each one within the community. Yet, despite the recommendations stressing the importance of equal and equitable access to vital information together with engaging the community to mitigate the impacts of the crisis for people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), there is no mention in the documents cited above of the way to concretely integrate interpreting needs in communicating information which had to be delivered orally (e.g., a medical consultation), onsite or remotely (i.e., using digital means), in compliance with state-level restrictions.

3.1. The provision of quality and safe healthcare services

According to the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights (2008), patients using the Australian health system must be ensured to have equal and fair access to services and to reliable health information and care. The charter states that wherever and whenever care is provided, it is of high quality and is safe. This focus is also why the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards (2017) were set, to protect "the public from harm and to improve the quality of health service provision" (NSQHS Standards, 2017).

Interpreting in healthcare settings may pertain to either medical consultations, hospital settings or private practice (Hale, 2007), and may be requested in a large spectrum of specific medical contexts and domains, requiring both an understanding of the fields concerned (e.g., anatomy, physiology) as well as of the medical terminology involved (Crezee, 2013). This need for an additional level of specialized knowledge in specific contexts is echoed by Eser who describes community interpreting as "truly interdisciplinary in that it takes place within the context of other professional settings" (Eser, 2020, p. 21). Specific training on what interpreting in medical contexts involves is therefore to be encouraged to ensure interpreters working in healthcare hold this knowledge of specialized terminology on top of their interpreting skills and provide the highest possible quality in their services. It is with a view to responding to such needs for specialization for interpreters that NAATI developed a specific Certified Health Specialist Interpreter credential in its 2018 new scheme of certifications tests. The ability to provide remote interpreting services is also part of the palette of skills interpreters need to master when working in the healthcare sector. In this respect, under the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care standards, Action 2.8 states that the "Australian Government's Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) can supply phone and onsite services", echoing the *Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights* (2008): "Interpreter

services … provided in person or by phone" (Beagley et al., 2020, p. 117), but not mentioning other possible modalities. However, it is worth noting that no specific information on how to prepare for the quality provision of such services (training of interpreters and users, technical requirements etc.) is to be found in any of these frameworks and response plans.

3.2. Remote interpreting in healthcare settings: From telephone to video remote interpreting

Interpreting services are fully part of the provision of healthcare and, when onsite interpreting is no longer an option, resorting to remote interpreting (RI) is a convenient way of ensuring the continuity of services. There are many definitions of RI, also called Distance Interpreting (DI) (Braun, 2020), but they all concur that RI is a meeting modality where the interlocutors do not meet in person and where the interpreting is performed via media (telephone, internet). Generally, the interpreter is not physically present during the exchange and performs from a remote location.

Telephone Interpreting (TI), or over-the-phone interpreting (Braun, 2015), is one of various modalities comprised under the term of Remote Interpreting (RI). It is an audio-only modality and can be defined as follows: "Telephone interpreting refers to situations in which the interpreter works over the telephone, without seeing one or either of the two primary parties in the communicative event*" (Lee, 2007, p. 231). TI has been strongly linked to community interpreting since the 1970s (Braun, 2015), especially within hospitals and clinics where onsite interpreting staff could provide such services internally. Until the pandemic hit, figures showed that TI was the preferred and most used modality in healthcare after onsite interpreting (Braun, 2015). In Australia, TI has existed since the early 1970s and language service providers and interpreters are familiar with its use. Research findings show that when providing Remote Interpreting (RI) in healthcare in Australia, Telephone Interpreting is the most predominant and most used modality (Ozolins, 2011; Locatis et al, 2010). Yet, and despite its accessibility, it has been observed that TI is not always the preferred option when face-to-face exchanges is not possible. In his 2007 study, Rosenberg cast light on the many challenges TI poses in comparison with in-person interpreting, especially in regard to situational factors. In a face-to-face exchange, the interpreter sees the speakers and deciphers part of the meaning from the non-verbal cues, and TI clearly proves an obstacle in that regard (Connell, 2006; Lee, 2007). In TI, communication mismatches are difficult to resolve, while they are generally overcome in face-to-face situations (Määttä & Wiklund, 2024). Another obstacle posed by, but not limited to TI, is the possibility of a technical glitch, hence slowing down or even impeding communication. Ozolins (2011) adds that, for years, the high cost of telephone calls also proved an obstacle for a wider use. On this note however, and in addition to its ease of use, TI has benefitted from the rapid development of internet use and proves less costly nowadays than booking an interpreter for in-person meetings, especially when organized via call centers (Masland et al., 2010). Despite its obvious advantages, TI does have limitations. Wang (2018) stresses the dissatisfaction of Australian interpreters with this medium, as evidenced through a survey of 465 interpreters, and recommends that all parties involved in the interpreter-mediated communication work together towards setting new protocols with the view of improving the TI experience at all levels. These challenges and recommendations are echoed by Cho (2023) who also points out the need to increase awareness among healthcare professionals on the

status, role, and needs of telephone interpreters. This growing discontent with TI has led to the exploration of another modality associating image on top of sound, heralding the progressive use of Video Remote Interpreting (VRI).

The earliest documented multimedia experiment on Remote Interpreting (RI) using satellite transmission of both image and sound was undertaken in 1976 by UNESCO, with the interpreters based in Paris and the conference center in Nairobi (Mouzourakis, 1996). With the rapid rise of new technologies, remote interpreting modalities slowly evolved from TI (audio-only communications) to video-communicated exchanges, thanks to the development of the Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN). However, these early explorations faced some obstacles in terms of bandwidth and audio quality and, for years, did not meet the quality standards required by the T&I profession (Böcker & Anderson, 1993). Exploring options via videophony in conference interpreting, Böcker and Anderson (1993) described Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) as a modality enabling the interpreter to work while being physically absent from the conference site and put forward the advantage it presents in terms of travel requirements, arguing VRI is particularly suitable for last minute assignments, when organizing the interpreter's trip is no longer possible. Other advantages over TI would be the possible visual access to non-verbal cues and the more dynamic engagement of the participants.

In an era when digital access to both sound and image has become mainstream, VRI could be promised a bright future, particularly in tele-healthcare. Taking these factors into account, it was not surprising to see LSPs and hospitals' in-house language services switch to VRI from the very onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, in an attempt to ensure the safest and most efficient care for parties involved in healthcare communication. As mentioned earlier, a record increase in the use of this modality have been reported by several institutions or providers in 2020. However, though remote interpreting (both TI and VRI) are seen as worthy solutions when facing unexpected crises and language needs (Skaaden, 2018), performing through VRI still remains quite a novel and difficult exercise for interpreters and medical staff, and the use of this modality is not as widespread as one could imagine.

It is against this background that the study presented in the section below was designed and carried out, with a view to providing evidenced-based information on the usability of the VRI modality, as well as identifying potential obstacles to its wider use and making recommendations for better future integration and application in health facilities.

4. The study

4.1. Rationale and method

The aim of the study was to investigate how VRI was implemented in healthcare facilities when the COVID-19 pandemic broke out and lockdowns were put in place across different Australian states, and more precisely how it impacted working conditions of interpreters and medical staff, how LSPs and internal language services managed such an implementation, what its potential benefits and disadvantages

were compared to other modalities and, finally, what obstacles, if any, hindered its wider use in the provision of healthcare services. The study was carried out via exploratory and descriptive research, quantitative and qualitative approaches, with data collected through surveys/questionnaires and interviews.

Questionnaires targeted at professional interpreters with experience in the healthcare sector and at medical staff aimed at eliciting how they prepared and adapted to changes in their working habits and conditions, and in the management of their workflow, and what their perceptions and sentiments about remote modalities were. The respondents to the questionnaires were, one the one hand, NAATI certified interpreters with a minimum of one-year experience in healthcare interpreting; on the other hand, healthcare professionals with experience in working with interpreters before and after the pandemic broke out. It was anticipated that the data collected could inform future application and better integration of such modalities in healthcare.

Interviews of interpreting managers in charge of the overall running of operations in LSPs and hospital language departments were conducted to gather pre- and post-pandemic information on the management of the provision of interpreting services, be it when using in-house interpreters or external casual ones. Large hospitals in Australia often employ a fixed team of in-house interpreters, especially for the most in-demand languages. When an interpreter for a specific language cannot be supplied internally, they rely on casual interpreters generally provided by LSPs. A particular focus of the interviews was put on the benefits and possible limitations of one interpreting modality over another, as well as on their technical and logistical practicality. Participants in the interviews were from language service departments in hospitals in Victoria or language service providers in Victoria and New South Wales.

The study (data collection and analysis) was carried out between September 2020 and September 2021. It received Macquarie University Ethics approval number 52021928324745.

4.2. Data collection

4.2.1. Questionnaire to interpreters

The questionnaire targeted interpreters with experience in healthcare settings. The proposed study was introduced and circulated via the AUSIT newsletter in early June 2021, and the link to the LimeSurvey questionnaire was active from 15 June 2021 to 01 August 2021. The questionnaire was also disseminated thanks to the support of LSPs and in-house language services departments in hospitals mostly located in Melbourne, Victoria. The professional audience targeted were interpreters of spoken languages with an experience of minimum one year. The level of NAATI certification required to participate was Certified Provisional Interpreter or Certified Interpreter to ensure the professionals participating in the survey were trained practitioners as some of the questions pertained to their experience on the field and would prove useful to shed light on any potential adjustments they might need to implement based on their professional knowledge and perception.

The questionnaire consisted of a total of 28 questions organized under four categories: interpreter profile, impact of the pandemic, working conditions, and interpreter views. To obtain data on similar aspects pertaining to the delivery of interpreting services, the set of questions was also reflected, with some adjustments, in the questionnaire to healthcare professionals as well as in the interview questions (see sections below).

A total of 226 interpreters (n=226) took part in the study. Some questions focused on quantitative content (percentages and numbers) while others called for attitudinal responses about respondents' views and perspectives and allowed for some subjective data to complement the objective information collected under the same section. Furthermore, in some cases, the possibility was offered to participants to add their own input as an alternative to proposed answers, which could allow the capture of information on other aspects of VRI in healthcare settings. The completion rate of the entire questionnaire was 78.3% (n=177).

4.2.2. Questionnaire to healthcare professionals

The second questionnaire targeted professionals working in healthcare settings with experience in working with interpreters. Their roles or positions would pertain to the delivery of healthcare services and could comprise nurses, clinicians, surgeons, among others. These healthcare professionals worked for hospitals and clinics in NSW and Victoria and would at times be involved in interpreted exchanges when dealing with a CALD patient. Respondents could complete the 29-question survey through LimeSurvey, following the same procedure as the surveyed interpreters.

Contacts were established to share and circulate this study within healthcare institutions. The questionnaire was accessible from 18 June 2021 to 24 August 2021. Unfortunately, a few obstacles led to a significantly low number of participants (n = 5); the main one being in-house ethical requirements of hospitals. The timeline of the clearance process requested by internal ethics committees was generally going over the timeline of this study. Also, some feedback indicated it was difficult for respondents to access the online questionnaire from their workstations because of the (legitimately) strict firewall/internet access imposed on staff working in hospital settings, as was confirmed later by interviewees working in hospital language departments.

After the initial two questions on the healthcare professional's profile, the main focus of this questionnaire was on the operational side of interpreting services, the equipment involved and VRI platforms used, the feedback received in-house, and the respondents' professional opinion and perspective. The overall completion rate is 100 % for 5 participants.

4.2.3. Interviews

The choice of a cross-sectional approach to capture a 'screenshot' of what happened when all the management of interpreting activities were put to an abrupt halt at the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, coupled with a longitudinal approach to observe the period from then until mid-2021, was made to

gather and infer from observations stemming both from the public sector (hospitals) and the private sector (LSPs). In this regard, a series of structured interviews were organized with managers of interpreting services sharing their experiences in the field, with a specific focus on the provision of services through VRI. Interviewees who took part all have a long experience spanning from 12 years to more than 30 years in healthcare interpreting management, either as coordinators working in hospitals and clinics, or within LSPs.

A total of six 45-minute interviews were conducted in September 2021. Two Melbourne-based LSPs, three hospital language service departments, and one governmental agency agreed to take part in this process. A series of 38 questions were prepared with the two research questions in mind. The use of the same set of questions aimed to reduce the margin for bias responses as much as possible while collecting data that was subjective. A Participant's Information and Consent Form was communicated to the interviewees a few days prior to the interview, to allow them to understand the objective and the scope of the study. The interviews were conducted on the Zoom platform. The questions were grouped into four main categories: General questions, VRI training, interpreting in healthcare settings, and potential obstacles to the use of VRI.

5. Findings and discussion

Before looking at the findings and discussing them, it is important to recall that the use of VRI and TI varied on the level of lockdown restrictions in place. At level 4, the highest level of restrictions enforced in Victoria as soon as August 2020 and throughout the three lockdowns to follow in that State alone, as well as in NSW mid-2021 for 15 consecutive weeks, no onsite interpreting could be provided except in Emergency Departments where only in-house interpreters fully equipped with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) were authorized. This scenario therefore only applied to hospitals and clinics who did have in-house interpreting staff to meet their internal needs. As confirmed by managers during the interviews, it is also worth noting that VRI was already suggested as an alternative solution before the health crisis of 2020- 2021. Several trials were carried out both by LSPs and by language interpreting departments in hospitals. When the pandemic hit, healthcare services could not be brought to a halt and a solution had to be found to maintain a satisfying level of care. The projects which were already in the pipeline to offer VRI then proved very useful and, under urgent pressure, increased in volume.

The following sections present a summary and a synthesis of the findings from the responses to the two questionnaires and from the interviews, as well as a general discussion. Full details on each survey questions and interviews can be found in the full report of the research project (Bachelier, 2022).

5.1. Use and perceptions

5.1.1. Interpreters' experience and volume of work

Introductory questions aimed at outlining the general profile of participating interpreters focusing on their overall interpreting experience and their experience in interpreting in healthcare settings. The findings show that 63% of respondents had more than 10 years of experience, 15% between 6 and 10 years, and 22% between 1 and 5 years. All had experience with interpreting in healthcare settings and interpreters with more than 10 years of experience were those with the highest percentage of work in healthcare (54% of their assignments). For those with less experience, working in healthcare settings counted for about 25% of their time on average.

5.1.2. Impact of the pandemic on VRI use

Other questions aimed at understanding how the pandemic affected the interpreters' work overall with a focus on the type of assignments performed before and during the pandemic, the experience of interpreters in VRI or TI. The responses to the question about the pre-pandemic type of assignments showed that 15% of interpreters worked only or mostly onsite, 26% equally onsite or remotely, 46% mostly remotely, and 13% only remotely. As for their experience in remote interpreting, about half of the respondents (48.3%) had pre-pandemic experience working in both TI and VRI, 38% only in TI, and 7% only in VRI.

As previously discussed, the shift to remote interpreting was obvious during the pandemic. The use of TI increased from 21% in 2019 to 42% and 39% respectively in 2020 and 2021. The data collected about the proportional use of VRI before and during the pandemic showed that VRI use increased from 0% in 2019 to 2% in 2020 and 5% in 2021. Though 5% may seem low it meant an increase of 100% or more in various hospitals, as reported by managers of interpreting services. Interpreters noted an increase of 68% on average in the use of VRI in healthcare assignments.

5.1.3. Working conditions

Several questions aimed to identify the devices used by interpreters when delivering their services remotely and the length of the average VRI assignment. The respondents were asked to select which platforms they were using when performing VRI. A number of pre-selected options were available as well as a comment section to allow for any further information in this regard. The Zoom platform tops the list, followed by Microsoft Teams and Cisco Webex. Telehealth, Healthdirect, and the platform used by Multicultural NSW are the three 'other' platforms mentioned by the respondents.

In terms of equipment, 85% of the respondents reported they were not provided with any image-supported device to deliver their service by the LSPs or hospitals. When asked about the settings for the delivery of their service, 85 % of respondents indicate they work from home and only 11 % mention working from a

hub. As for their impressions regarding the length of VRI assignments compared to onsite ones, 47% of interpreters felt the duration was similar, but 38% believed VRI assignments were shorter.

5.1.4. Interpreters' views on VRI and on-site or telephone interpreting

A total of 14 questions were proposed to gauge the views of interpreters on the VRI modality compared to the two other modalities. Interpreters expressed a preference for onsite interpreting compared to remote (56% vs 43%), mainly because of better remuneration and the sentiment to offer a more personal service. This sentiment was echoed by healthcare professionals and managers of interpreting services. VRI was preferred to TI (52% vs 47%), primarily because of the audio-only nature of TI, which can be a serious obstacle to clear communication in case of poor sound input, patient's strong accent, or even specific technical content, VRI offering the possibility to infer some meaning from visual cues.

5.2. Opportunities, challenges, and future outlook

5.2.1. Benefits and advantages

The responses showed the VRI modality offers a number of advantages for healthcare interpreting. VRI allows healthcare providers to connect with qualified interpreters regardless of their geographical location, especially for geographically dispersed patients, ensuring timely access to interpreting services. A broader pool of interpreters with potentially higher NAATI credentials can be accessed, potentially improving the quality of the service provided. It also eliminates the need for interpreters to travel to hospitals and clinics, saving time and costs, and allows them to accept more assignments daily. Managers noted that VRI can help streamline workflow for hospitals and LSPs, allowing them to handle more bookings and manage a wider range of languages more efficiently. Respondents repeatedly mentioned that visual cues are crucial for effective communication (e.g., non-verbal communication, turn-taking, interaction management), especially when tasks like sight translation have to be undertaken.

5.2.2. Challenges and obstacles

The study shows that, while VRI offers increased accessibility and convenience, it is not without its challenges. The main obstacles to the use of VRI, as perceived by the interpreters, include the higher risk of bad input with VRI (45.45%), more coordination effort prior to the assignment (42.78%), and internet access (41.18%). Interpreters reported finding VRI sessions more cognitively demanding than on-site interpreting due to factors like limited non-verbal cues and potential technical issues. These technical issues included poor internet connection, inadequate Wi-Fi, and lack of proper equipment for interpreters in some hospitals, with visibility and/or audibility issues often hindering the smooth flow of VRI sessions. Additionally, long waiting times before connection and limited opportunities for pre-session briefings were reported by interpreters, potentially impacting the quality of interpreting services. Furthermore, some healthcare professionals expressed concerns about privacy, confidentiality, and family member involvement during VRI sessions, leading them to prefer on-site interpreting when feasible. This concern

was recently echoed in an international study carried out by CSA Research (CSA Research, 2023), which reveals trust levels by users of interpreting services for different interpreting sources. Full trust was placed in face-to-face interpreting (78% of respondents), while confidence in remote interpreters dropped to 56%.

5.2.3. Training and support

While most interpreters received some form of VRI training before or during the pandemic, many expressed a need for further training to enhance their skills and address specific challenges encountered during VRI sessions. Hospitals and LSPs adopted various approaches to training, including providing internal guidelines, protocols, and webinars. However, the study emphasizes the need for more comprehensive training programs that address the following specific areas: Technical aspects of VRI platforms and troubleshooting common technical issues (e.g., choice of audio and video equipment, connectivity requirements); ethical considerations specific to VRI, including data privacy and confidentiality; effective communication strategies for VRI sessions, focusing on maximizing non-verbal cues and establishing clear communication protocols.

5.2.4. Perceptions on the future use of VRI

The responses from both interpreters and providers suggested that VRI would likely play a continued role in healthcare interpreting even after the pandemic would subside. However, for a future use of the modality to be sustainable and optimized, usage requires addressing the identified challenges. This could be achieved through investing in reliable technology and providing adequate equipment for interpreters to ensure seamless VRI sessions; developing comprehensive training and support programs for both interpreters and healthcare professionals to enhance their skills and address ethical considerations specific to VRI; streamlining booking processes and minimizing waiting times to improve efficiency and patient experience; emphasizing the importance of pre-session briefings and establishing clear communication protocols to ensure effective delivery of interpreting services. Furthermore, several participants insisted on the fact that striking a balance between the use of VRI and on-site interpreting is crucial. Given the preference of most respondents for onsite interpreting, healthcare professionals and LSPs should consider patient needs, preferences, and specific situations when determining the most appropriate mode of interpreting.

The study also highlighted the need for further research to explore the long-term impacts of VRI. The focus of future studies could be on interpreter well-being and potential for burnout due to increased cognitive demands; patient and client satisfaction with the quality of interpreting services received through VRI, also in comparison with telephone interpreting for example; healthcare outcomes and potential impact of VRI on communication clarity and patient understanding. Additionally, exploring innovative solutions like hybrid models combining VRI with onsite support for complex situations could be beneficial in ensuring effective communication and optimal healthcare delivery for all patients.

6. Conclusion

In this article, we have examined how medical interpreting changed during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically focusing on the adoption of Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) in Australia. After reviewing historical milestones in the development of interpreting services in the country and the pre-pandemic situation regarding the provision of language services in the healthcare sector, this article presented and discussed the findings of a study that aimed at assessing the usability of VRI and its implementation in a crisis situation, as well as eliciting the perceptions and preferences of participants involved in remote communication.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted healthcare delivery, it has also accelerated the adoption of VRI as a valuable tool in healthcare interpreting, surpassing telephone interpreting in popularity. While VRI offered advantages in specific situations, most participants expressed a preference for onsite interpreting due to the enhanced human connection, improved communication, and perceived value it provided for interpreters. VRI brings challenges such as unequal patient access to technology, a lack of standardized platforms requiring interpreters to be trained on various systems, and the potential for reduced care quality due to limitations inherent in remote communication. Various areas for future research on the topic have been identified and include, among other things, the need to assess the impact of VRI platforms or of assignment duration on the health and well-being of interpreters, to investigate the effect of equipment quality on the communication situation and the inherent risks on patients' health in case of failure to properly use the modality. Responses from participants also invited the exploration of additional features to VRI like live captioning and chat boxes and their impact on the quality of interpretation.

By addressing the identified challenges and opportunities, and by ensuring proper investment in digital infrastructure and in training and support for both interpreters and healthcare professionals, VRI has the potential to become a permanent fixture in healthcare interpreting in Australia and to improve accessibility, efficiency, and quality of interpreting services, ultimately contributing to better healthcare outcomes for patients with diverse language needs.

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Book Review

Review of *Language, Society and Power: An Introduction* (6th ed.) by Annabelle Mooney and Betsy Evans, ISBN: 9780367638443, Routledge. 2023.

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The 6th edition of *Language, Society and Power: An Introduction* examines how language contributes to our understanding and expression of the world, as well as who determines what language is appropriate to use. With updates and new international examples provided, it becomes clear that this work has no intention of enlightening researchers who already work in the field. Furthermore, it serves as a course textbook that provides students with an overview of the field of linguistics and the importance of language in contemporary society. In this book, a wide variety of topics is addressed, including details regarding the integration of linguistics into politics, media, gender, ethnicity, and society. Consequently, the book is highly interdisciplinary and relevant to students of linguistics and other fields such as media, communication, cultural studies, and sociology. Using an engaging and accessible writing style, each chapter contains a core introduction followed by details and examples, as well as activities incorporated into the chapters that encourage students to reflect on their own ideas about language. In addition, readers can explore each topic across separate sections, thereby gradually acquiring knowledge of the field.

"Why Study Language and What Is Language?", the first chapter of the book, is an introductory chapter intended to serve as a starting point for some of the questions and ideas that should be considered throughout the book. It brings together a wide range of examples showing the links between them and explaining fundamental theories about connections between language, ideology, and power. This chapter, for example, refers to Kress and Hodge's (1993, p. 6) definition of ideology, which is defined as "a systematic body of ideas, organized from a particular point of view". It is emphasized in this chapter that understanding language as a system, which has an inherently understood structure and that we can use this understanding to look at the kinds of variation that we see in language. In addition, it also pinpoints the two attitudes that those who wish to establish rules on proper language use are describing what people do with language (description), whereas those wishing to determine if a certain use is correct or incorrect are prescribing proper language usage (prescription). It was stressed by the authors at the end that studying language can enable individuals to understand how language is used to exercise power and, in turn, how they can resist this exercise, as well as help them appreciate how complex the relationship between language and power is. As shown in this chapter, "political correctness" is one such example (p. 18).

Chapter 2 introduces the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, whose ideas contributed to the development of linguistics and semiology. The author, as recalled in Chapter 1, explains, in detail, that "language is a system of representation" (p. 23) and that systems have rules which are used to structure language. It is noteworthy that the authors concur with Saussure's statement that "a sign needs other signs in order to have meaning" (p. 27). In addition to discussing the synchronic and diachronic characteristics of language, the authors point out the diversity of linguistic systems. Moreover, the authors introduced the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which has two forms: language determines thought or language influences thinking. To gain an understanding of how language is chosen and the factors that influence people's use of language, the authors offer an analytical tool, transitivity analysis, that is used to investigate lexical choices. However, the authors assert that every language choice, whether intentionally or unconsciously made, exhibits an ideological orientation.

Chapter 3 includes updated events, such as the 2020 US presidential election, along with state-of-the-art examples of "Language and Politics". Additionally, the authors highlight the fact that "politics

affect everything" (p. 47) and that language plays an essential role in understanding these social activities. This includes the use of language in political speeches, debates, and propaganda, as well as the regulation of language in institutions and policies. The authors discuss "Western politics" in the book, emphasizing that "equality/fairness" is at the core of Western politics. A brief discussion of eight linguistic tools is provided through the example of buying biscuits. As a means of constructing an argument, the authors differentiate presuppositions into semantic and pragmatic presuppositions, but stress semantic presupposition as being the most important. The edition removes the content of the chapter "Words and Weapons: The Politics of War" and replaces it with "Climate Change and Political Discourse". It also illustrates the importance of the use of pronouns in this area by citing Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg as an example. Further, the authors introduce the concept of metaphor and agree with Horner's (2011) interpretation of metaphor, that is, metaphors serve as a means of linking political discourse with ideology by providing models for making sense of the world around us. At the end of this chapter, the authors lead to the fourth chapter and discuss research on political communication on Twitter and point out that the increasing prominence of Twitter in the public sphere for political discourse has raised many new questions regarding how political communication can be studied.

Chapter 4, "Language and Media", thus provides a detailed description of how developing mass media are enhancing the ability of citizens to discuss public topics on social network sites in the contemporary media landscape. In these complicated and evolving ways, mass media give rise to social and linguistic practices that are impacting how we relate to each other, how we manage and present ourselves as individuals, and how we interact with communities. This author also agrees with Noam Chomsky's and Edward Herman's (1988) views regarding media filtering as a factual matter. In this regard, the author explains that a public's agreement with both the information and the ideologies that structure it is not a "real" agreement but rather a "manufactured consent" because the information is altered by these filters. By doing so, the authors expand ongoing debates around fake news; he focuses primarily on the implications for marketing and consumers of social media misinformation, as well as the implications of fake news for political communication.

Chapter 5, "Linguistic Landscapes", briefly summarizes the rapidly growing field of linguistic landscapes (LL), which not only explores the use of language in everyday semiotic environments, but also distinguishes between online landscapes and physical landscapes by considering the virtual landscape. Additionally, the linguistic landscape influences the impact of spaces on individuals and groups, as language and signs can influence how they choose language and interact with them. However, a large array of factors can have a determining effect on the choices people make when it comes to their expression. Chapters 6 to 8 of this book examine how occurrences of variants of a "linguistic variable" are systematically related to a number of contextual factors, including gender, ethnicity, and age, which effectively correlate with each other. However, it is important to note that some of the content in Chapter 6 is entirely new, for example discussing how Twitter campaigns to echo the government encouraged people to stay at home during the Pandemic of early 2021 in the UK. There were some images shown on Twitter to encourage Propaganda supporters to stay at home. This image has the obvious feature that all the work is being done by the women, whereas the only male is shown sitting down and relaxing on a sofa (p. 130). According to Sunderland (2004), gender is not the

only factor that has an impact on linguistic practices or other social activities, but other intrinsic factors such as ethnicity can be considered.

Thus, Chapter 7 examines how ethnicity and language are interconnected, as well as how minorities come under the label of being ethnically different caused by language differences. This chapter also explores the ways in which media representation can perpetuate racist ideologies and stereotypes. Moreover, the authors discuss how the internet can be used to propagate racist ideologies and amplify racist messages. In a similar vein, a discussion is given in Chapter 8 of the way people of different life stages communicate with one another and of the way we talk to them, revealing that societal expectations of what certain life stages entail create specific stresses on those individuals. These pressures may manifest themselves in the particular use of language by individuals towards the groups, which often reflects our own perception of their linguistic abilities, rather than their incapacity to communicate.

Chapter 9 discusses social class and symbolic capital. There is a significant role that social class plays in determining language usage and acquisition, and different social classes often have their own unique language style, vocabulary, and grammar usage. The use of language and changes in it can also be directly related to social order and class inequalities. These inequalities can impact quality education and resources, further compounding the disparities in language proficiency. In the context of social class and language, symbolic capital can include the use of prestigious vocabulary, proper grammar, and fluent communication skills. Individuals with more symbolic capital are able to project an image of authority, credibility, and belonging, which can further reinforce social divisions and inequalities.

Chapter 10 focuses on Global English; with English becoming a global lingua franca, native English speakers far outnumber non-native English speakers as non-native speakers have spread throughout the globe. In this regard, the authors cite two modes of learning English: the lingua franca model and the other a world Englishes model (p. 229). In the former, other English varieties are rejected and standard English is emphasized, whereas in the latter, learners are encouraged to learn according to their self-development by focusing on multiculturalism rather than imitating native-like English. In addition, the authors discuss how the hegemonic nature of English led to linguistic imperialism, which is a process through which a dominant language imposes its norms and standards on other languages and cultures, marginalizing and suppressing them. This can result in the erosion of local languages, cultural homogenization, and the marginalization of certain communities within the global linguistic landscape. Chapter 11 provides some examples of research projects to inspire readers to conduct their own research. By presenting these projects, the authors hope to demonstrate to readers that the language used in everyday life is as relevant as it is valuable.

In conclusion, there is a discussion of language use in politics and the media in the course *Language, Society and Power: An Introduction* (6th edition) in addition to differences in language use according to gender, ethnicity, age, and class as well as global Englishes in the book. Throughout the book, readers learn to explore how language is portrayed, how identity is constructed, and how language can be used creatively in media, politics, or everyday conversation. Also, it provokes the reader to reflect on to what extent are attitudes towards language use and notions of correctness important; and how language affects and constructs our linguistic experiences.

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Chen Luyu completed a master's program in Global Journalism and Public Relations at Coventry University in the UK and is currently pursuing her PhD research in Gender Studies and Discourse Analysis at the University of Szeged, Hungary. Her research interests include critical discourse analysis discourse, language, ideology and power, and feminist media studies.

Book Review

Review of *The Cultural Turn in Translation Studies* by Wang Ning, ISBN: 978-1-032-63819-5, Routledge. 2024.

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Since its establishment as an independent field of research, Translation Studies has had more propensity towards the linguistic theories such as the concept of equivalence, quality of translation and models of translation (Vasheghani Farahani, 2013). However, in the 1990s, one witnessed a radical shift from pure linguistic theories towards cultural and literal ones. This massive shift is literally called "cultural turn" and is best exemplified by the seminal works of such scholars as Bassnett and Lefevere (Hmala, 2023).

Indeed, the cultural turn emphasizes the diversity and hybridity of cultures, recognizing the fact that translations often involve the blending of multiple cultural factors in the source and target languages. In other words, this line of research sheds light on the complex nexus between language, culture, and translation and tries to bridge the gap between them (Munday, 2022).

Structurally framed into ten chapters, spanning thematically the issue of cultural turn in Translation Studies, this absorbing monograph makes a considerable contribution to the field and is an effort to push the theoretical boundaries of the mutual interconnectedness of culture and translation with a designated focus on the Chinese language. The author was successful in consolidating various chapters to delve systematically into the concept of culture in the domain of Translation Studies and its pivotal role in Chinese culture. When read in one sitting, it becomes immediately conspicuous that the book presents reasoned arguments for the emergence of cultural turn in Translation Studies.

The first chapter under the title of "The Cultural Turn in Translation and the Turn to Translation Studies in Cultural Studies" functions as an introduction and lays the ground for the theoretical issues as well as the history of cultural and literary perspectives of translation. In addition, it explains, very succinctly, the history of translation as an academic field of inquiry and how it developed out of linguistics. The author professes that in the current stage of globalization and the leading role of English as an international and hegemonic language, the need for translation continues to exist. However, the process of globalization has caused cultures to become more diversified rather than uniform. This is bound, of course, to mean that, it is the essential role of scholars to look at translation through the lens of culture as "translation research that is carried out from the perspective of cultural studies has become a cutting-edge disciplinary" (p. 3).

Following the introductory chapter, the next chapter continues to explore the theories of translation pertaining to Cultural Studies. It offers a thorough insight into the history of Translation Studies. The author is admirably clear in his attempt to provide the prospective reader with a broad delineation of the history of Translation Studies and construct a solid rapport with Cultural Studies. In this regard, Ning refers to the central question of whether Translation Studies is an independent academic field of study or an art which can be gained by some scattered experience. By quoting well-versed and prominent scholars such as Derrida, Nida and Venuti, the author approaches the discipline of Translation Studies from various perspectives running the gamut from literary, cultural, and linguistic to artistic ones and concludes that Translation Studies must be recognized as an academic field of research.

Chapter three moves on to study the cultural turn of translation. This chapter is a considerable coverage devoted to the critical nexus between translation and deconstruction- a theory which is an "invaluable legacy for contemporary translation theories" (p. 29). There is no denying that deconstruction theory

of translation is in the works of German scholar, Walter Benjamin, especially the one entitled "The Task of the Translator". Recognizing the critical role of Benjamin, the chapter continues to flesh out the theory of deconstruction by reflecting the works of the French scholar Derrida who added significantly to the field. Ning tries to recap the question raised by Derrida: "What is a relevant translation?" The authors conclude that by courtesy of Derrida's work, the theory of deconstruction gained significance and replaced the earlier dominance of structuralism and made a far-reaching impact on translation.

The sequencing chapter goes on to take a deeper and detailed look at the deconstruction theories of translation. As a matter of fact, chapter four is exclusively focused on one of the areas of the school of Cultural Translation, that is to say, domestication and foreignization - a theory which is in the theoretical context of deconstruction school of translation. It came into fruition through the works of the German scholar, Schleiermacher, and flourished further by the Italian translator scholar, Venuti. He zooms in on translation from the dichotomy of (in) visibility of translator and divides translation into domesticated or foreignized. Venuti apparently claims that the foreignization translation is better as it helps to disseminate diversified cultures through translation.

One of the theories which is directly taken from the Cultural Turn in Translation Studies is postcolonial translation. It is indeed an intercivilizational account of cultural aspects of translation which found its foot in the 1980s through the research of such scholars as Said, Spivak and Bhabha. In chapter five, the author succinctly reports the various aspects of this theory and concludes that although postcolonial theory has been extensively examined in Cultural Studies and is regarded as a strong theoretical framework, in Translation Studies, it has its pros and cons.

Translation Studies has long been influenced by linguo-centric theories and scholars in Linguistics have been preoccupied by the long debate of equivalence, translator faithfulness and source vs. target languages. However, with the advent of comparative literature, new schools of thought (deconstruction as an example) came into being, opening new horizons for the study of translation. For this reason, chapter seven clarifies the interconnectedness of Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies with a designated focus on Translation Studies. The author concludes that the linguistic aspects of translation have now been subsumed by the cultural theories as they are found more pertinent for running research in this line of study.

Chapter eight deals with translation and the relocation of cultures. By relocation, Ning means that by the function of translation/ translators, cultures are relocated from the source text into the target one as a reciprocal process. He contends that translation can play a positive role in "remapping world literatures" (p. 166). To justify this issue, the author refers to Chinese and English languages as a case in point. He concludes that translation of excellent foreign works into Chinese is essential for the globalization of Chinese culture and literature and translation will assist the Chinese culture to gain currency in an international scale.

Under the spell of intersemiotic translation and the groundbreaking work of Jakobson, chapter seven marks the "intersemiotic translation" and the "visual turn in Translation Studies". Ning argues cogently that "The function of translation… is manifested in two ways: one can translate and explain images in another cultural context with words, and at the same time, the words can also participate in the

construction of a visual culture" (p. 136) by taking two interrelated aspects into account: The aesthetic features of postmodern consumer culture and iconographical turn in contemporary culture. The former takes a Marxist stance and eyeballs into the consumptive features of contemporary culture, whereas the latter examines the combination of textual and pictorial language (image for example) between the source and target texts. The author posits that images are inherently capable of making up for the inadequacy of verbal expressions, and it is therefore the very job of translators to translate them intersemiotically into the target language to be able to convey the meaning into the target language.

The last chapter investigates the role of translation in the Chinese revolution. As the author purports, it leaves no doubt that cultural turn took place a long time ago in China and brought about massive changes in the Chinese revolution and modernization. In this regard, the author considers translation as an instrument of cultural enlightenment in the context of China and holds the view that translation ensued into a massive cultural turn and opened the eyes of the Chinese to the world.

It goes without saying that this volume adds to our knowledge of the essential role of culture in translation. Part of the appeal and strength of this book consists of the fact that it gives a detailed account of the way culture can be studied in relation to translation. Indeed, it is a full-fledged effort to bring the cultural theories of translation to the fore. It is therefore a compelling and must-read publication for seasoned readers in the field. Overall, the book provides an insightful account of the cultural aspects of translation and provides readers with accessible theoretical models for doing research in the domain of culture and translation. Lastly, this book must be appreciated for the high quality of print, which makes it an enjoyable resource to read.

Despite its strengths, it is reasonable to conclude that this book is not presented as a pedagogically sound work of scholarship. Indeed, all the chapters revolve around some theoretical issues, leaving a big room for practical and research-based aspects of cultural turns in translation. For this reason, the current book is by no means suitable for doing practical research in the domain of cultural translation.

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